

Cooking with Chance

By Norman Bargo (November 2025)

CHAPTER 1: Patrick

There wasn't anything particular about that day. He felt normal. Everyone seemed washy, normal. Work, as for work, Chance was a lab assistant, he'd gotten that position through his friend Josh, Josh once worked there and needed an assistant under him, but Josh left almost a year ago, and yet Chance remained 'nine more months and I'll be here longer than he had!' Chance once thought. Did he like his job? No? Sometimes he convinced himself he hated going to work, and he'd rather be at home, but what would he do, anyway? Lie in bed? No, work was fine. Mainly he disliked the repetitive nature of it, made his mind wander; it didn't give him that natural feel of busyness that working with your hands can. One part of the work he couldn't stand was his boss. He figured that in an illness testing lab, everyone would have PhDs and be 'very professional scientists', but that wasn't quite the case. He was more of a business type who knew how to connect people. He was fine as far as work actually went, didn't always show up when he should, but that wasn't quite the fine. What wasn't fine was his promising to talk about a raise after a certain date, then not committing on it. But that wasn't really the reason the boss was an issue; it was that asshole look he kept giving Chance, like Chance was some shit that got dragged in on someone's shoe.

Things got better when Patrick walked in. Chance was on the computer, and his eyebrows raised, and he turned around. "Hey, still raining out?" Patrick smiled vaguely with that confused look he sometimes wore. "Rain? I haven't noted any today." "What? Did you sleep in late?" "Maybe" Patrick got to his own side of the room, they were almost never facing each other since Patrick stood, hovering over a desk, while Chance was sitting down by the computer on a totally different side of the room, but it was fine, he didn't want Patrick to see him well, anyway.

Chance wasn't the type to like anyone; maybe he was in his soul a mountain man without the skill or manliness. But he did like Patrick. Maybe

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others were too stuffed up to see it, but Patrick was one of those rare people who'd actually never lie. He was also very razor thin normal. He had a plain face, dark brownish-black flat hair, slightly fat in all honesty. Sometimes he didn't shave; normally did. Very normal looking. Normal lifestyle too, Chance didn't know who or if he lived with anyone, but he did know he was straight edge, liked video games and wrestling, boring social life, normal. The only odd thing he had in him Chance knew of was his liking to smiling. For most people, a blank face is their normal even in conversation, but for Patrick, it seemed he considered a lack of a smile in the presence of others to actually be a frown. These conversational smiles were never big wide ones, very modest but pleasant. Admittedly at first Chance didn't care for him much, he thought he was phony, Patrick seemed like the sort to him that wasn't smart enough to get a job like this and only licked enough ass and known the right people to be where he was. Turned out Chance was the real phony one.

Chance, Chance Sailors of your wondering, was a different sort of person. He was somewhat tall, sometimes wore contacts sometimes thick black glasses depending on how sexy he felt. Brownish blonde hair with sideburns, a face that could remind one of a stuffed up over bred cat. And oddly large feet. Overall, not actually that odd looking, but he held bad eye contact with others, and worse had an odd voice. Odd in the sense that he always spoke like he was alone mumbling to himself.

Chance was staring at Patrick for a moment, back to him, when slowly Chance's eyes moved out to see gray cloudy blue haze outside, then he snapped back. "I heard your baking, eh?" Patrick said, still not looking at Chance. "Oh yeah, I am." "Cool. I don't do any of that, I'm too lazy. Yeah, I saw a photo you posted last night, I forgot you actually had socials. What got you into it?" Chance looked away and thought for a moment. "...To... Share it with people, have fun... I don't even eat some of the stuff I make." He heard Patrick chuckle a little. "Damn, next time you throw that out, give me it!" Chance's face fell, hand hard on the side of his chair. "No." There was a moment of silence between them. "Oh... Okay..." Chance stared at

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him for a while longer then turned away back to the computer, but he didn't start typing up again for some time.

Once he got started back on work, everything went back to the usual, his mind kept going back to what Patrick had said, about the food, every time it came to his mind Chance's mouth curled upwards and eyes narrowed. Two hours went by, and exactly twenty minutes before his lunch break, his phone started to vibrate, immediately he known who was calling him and didn't even bother looking at it. Chance told her a million times when his break was, and she never listened to him; it was like she still considered him unemployed. A while ago Chance put a ban on answering the phone whenever she did this. Time went by, he took the break, he didn't actually eat anything in that time, only leaning against the building outside. The sky had that weird look, like it was always getting ready to burst with rain, but never quite getting there. Didn't matter, a little rain never hurt anyone. While waiting to be back on his scrolled his phone, every time he tried to focus on what he was seeing, his thoughts wondered, but if he actually tried to focus on his wondering thoughts, he forgot what they were. Off in the distance he saw Patrick, still in the lab, which was odd given he normally zoomed out of there, thinking this was as good as a time as ever, Chance signed, lifting himself off the side of the wall like he was getting out of bed in the morn, and walked across the sidewalk and into the building. As he went by, one of his co-workers saw him and mumbled out "Hi." But as soon as Chance realized what they said, they were too far gone. Chance popped his head in, seeing Patrick was still there, as 'normally' as he could he snuck up to Patrick, close enough he could see what he was doing, but far away enough he didn't come off weird. Patrick seemed to be a little distressed, brows furrowed and lips pressed together tight, it was a bad look on him, like seeing a busty blonde woman in an ill-fitting hoodie and baggy eyes, it made Chance cringe.

"What are you up too?..." Chance asked, in a voice a little deeper than he meant it too come out, when he spoke like that people always took his words more serious than he meant it. Patrick glanced over himself,

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eyebrow raised but then relaxed and turned back to what he was doing. "Tests." "I didn't know there was more than usual, didn't get any papers on it yet..." "There's not-" Patrick sighed. "Trying to get this done early today, in a second I'll put these in the freezer and after that finish up, I have somewhere to be at 8." Suddenly feeling a little exposed, Chance walked back a little closer to his own desk. "Ah...Where?" It took Patrick a second to reply, which made Chance sink back a little more. "...Dinner with my brother and his wife." "Applebee's?" Patrick turned around to look at him, a little smile on his face, but Chance didn't take it all that friendly. "How did you know?" Chance's sucked his lips into his mouth slightly, he didn't know, he just guessed it, people he knew anyway went there for basically every occasion, his father had his 70th birthday there, his friends went there fairly often, which made him slowly start to hate it, since every time they went one person paid the whole bill, and for some reason slowly he started to pay every time. Chance didn't reply only turned his head slightly to Patrick. Patrick stared a second then turned away, then saying "Well, yeah we are. So, I'm trying to get that done. Luckily the tests areeeee..." And just then Patrick opened the freezing cold fridge, (which made the fridges you might have at home look like a children's play set) and after he had already placed all the tests into their slots in the pan and slowly slid it in the fridge and shut it. "Now I just have to wait, great... Maybe I should get something to eat now, eh?..."

Patrick looked up at the ceiling, still purple gloved hands to his shin (which he wasn't supposed to do) Chance eyed the gloves with some annoyance. Chance wanted to tell him to be more careful with 'The fucking drug tests' but didn't sound of not wanting to sound like Tracy, Chance's profoundly annoying (half) sister. Chance paused a moment then mumbled out "... I could do them for you." Patrick looked back to him, pulling off his gloves one by one. "Oh, well gosh man, I'd appreciate it, but I don't think you-" He cringed a little, eyeing the door. "Have the, you know, degree to do that, or the training, officially of course I know you can." Chance leaded into his chair nicely, fully turning to him so they were fully facing each other. "Nah it's fine. In-between Josh leaving and you signing up, I did them all. Not that I got paid for that, but I did. If they had an issue with that, they would say it."

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“Well... I have time, it’s not a big deal.” “I don’t have anything going on anyway, I don’t mention it too anyone.” Patrick signed, then tossed his gloves into the trash can, washing his hands for a moment then turning to face Chance. “Well, if you really want too, I’d really appreciate it.” Chance made a little attempt at a smile, saying, “No problem.” Patrick smiled at him, then walked over to him and patted him on the back a few times, making Chance moved away from him a little. “I owe you!”

After Patrick left everything became really slow, it wasn’t long after his shift would have ended until Chance got bored, but it wasn’t soon fine, he really wasn’t going to do anything after work anyway, he did have a wild hair about practice cooking again, by now by the time he got back home he might not want too. Outside of the lab room he kept hearing two girls in the other room gossiping, they were always gossiping, he wasn’t even sure what they did at work, they had a later shift, which was great sense then Chance wouldn’t have to hear them anymore. To him they were everything wrong with women, selfish, chatty without substance, ugly, generally unpleasant. Chance roiled his eyes and finished up his work. He packed up, grabbed his strangely unemptied lunch bag, and got into his car and drove home, for a second, he thought about going into the drive through and getting something quick to eat, but decided against it, he might have some stuff in the fridge he needed to eat up. Even though the darkness of the night he could still tell clouds far above were holding in rain ‘No way it’s not going to come down hard tonight.’ He thought, cringing at the idea of going to work tomorrow with the rain coming down hard. After a while he got up to his apartment building, parked by all the other little dirty cars, got out of his car empty handed, and went into the building. Inside the main room hall, stairs, elevator, and presumably every other room in the building he hadn’t been in, was a bright gray hot yellow, the sort that always comes with flickering lights. Everyone who lives there was noisy and often seemingly jobless, the few kids that lived there seemed to be quieter and well behaved then their zoo animal parents, there was no married couples as far as Chance could see. Worst of all, everyone there seemed to be crazy.

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He never took the elevator, he got the impression the elevator would shut off and leave him in there for a few hours, and if he got actually physically trapped in this building, he might lose his mind for real. The idea of a hypothetical departure in a bad situation made the world a difference. So, he took the stairs, that's where all the crazies liked to hang around, but that's what he chose. There always seemed to be some black teenager boys hanging around there in the morning, milling about, and at night the old druggies came out. Chance got off the stairs, and went through the hall leading to his door, but as soon as his hand turned the knob, he paused, the door wasn't locked. Had someone broken in, waiting for him? Maybe to kill him, or worse- No, they would just be a thief, probably for drug for rent money, but would they still be there? Chance gulped.

He swung the door open, blink twice, then signed. He cringed and considered actually walking out, but she spotted him, she was across the living room and too the kitchen. "Oh, there you are, it's really late." She said dryly. That was Tracy Dots, Chance's older (half-sister) though he thought of her more as an aunt then a sister, since she was 45 and he was 30, they didn't even grow up together in the same house. They hadn't really ever saw each other until a few years ago, it seemed to be pleasant at the time, but it turned out to be quite the misfortune for Chance since now she practically stalked him, she acted like he was a teenager who just moved out on his own. She was sort of a tall woman with a horse like face, hair a lot like Chance's and needlessly round glasses. She used to be a lot prettier but from what Chance could see from photos, as soon as she popped out two kids, she got a lot more homely. "What do you want?" Chance asked dully, she shrugged. "Nothing, I just stopped by to see how you were doing, went you didn't answer my call. I was nearby for groceries anyway. I got here a while ago but when you weren't here, I didn't want to leave without seeing you, didn't want you seeing anything moved and think the place was haunted or something." "Yeah well-" Chance looked out behind him to see a rather lost middle-aged man peeking out of his apartment door right at Chance, Chance stepped inside and shut the door. "It's not ghosts I'm scared of." Chance eyed Tracy thinly. "There's no reason for you to check up on me." "Oh yeah?" Tracy with a little scruff

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between her eyes and nose, reached into the nearby trash can in the kitchen and pulled out something. Chance almost asked what it was but caught himself, it was disturbingly moldy cheese, little green fluffy parts where here and there on the white base inside the see through package

His face got a little hot and he eyed her even harder, which seemed not to faze her. "I've been... Buying more foods lately and sometimes lose track of what I have." "Oh yeah, you have been cooking lately, right? I've been wanting to mention that, what you've been posting looks really good, I hate to say this, but you might be a better cook than me!" Her words made him feel a little weird, she pressed on. "I hate to ask, but sometimes I would love to try some of what you've been making. If you want." Chance looked away a moment, pretending to fiddle with his lab clothes "You will." He said in a deep voice, Tracy stopped smiling and placed her hands on her hips.

"I'd love too. Anyway, but you really shouldn't waste food. I just thrown out like 40 bucks of food if I had to guess."

"My money my problem." "

You do know mold is dangerous right?"

"Oh Yeah." Chance smiled wider again, in her deration this time though not right at her. "I know."

He stopped again very quickly she made Tracy frown even more. He said, "How did you even get in here?"

"The door wasn't locked."

Chance frowned, lips tightening. He glanced back at the door, then looked to her, and then all around the door, the lock seemed fine, the door wasn't damaged at all. But was everything around the house okay? Chance stormed past Tracy almost stepping on her foot. "Hey, it's probably fine, it's not like this isn't the first time you forgot to lock your door, Chance." He ignored her going into his bedroom, up on the red wall he had pictures of food he planned on making, mainly the ones he wanted to get just right. His bed was all thrown about with all of last week's cloths lying on it, but for the life of him he could have sworn he put those up last night. "It's fine Chance, I didn't see anything amiss!" She called out from the kitchen, but he just went on looking through all of his cabinets.

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“Well, you keep on keeping on with that, I’m going to go I guess, anything else you need me to do?” Chance walked out of his bedroom and started looking in the hallways closet. “Chance?” “Shut your door on the way out.” Tracy rolled her eyes. “Whatever, have a good night, Chance!” He heard her walk across the floor, she shut the door behind her. Sometimes Chance wondered if she’d leave him alone if her kids weren’t teens, he also wondered what her husband thought of her going over here.

A while of looking around he gave it up, going over to the front door and locking it. Was he really getting that forgetful? Tracy said she had come in before that way, but he couldn’t remember it. She’d come in many times but... Well, he didn’t want to get robbed by one of his many lovely neighbors, he couldn’t even name any of them, he did have little visual titles for them all, like that one fat old man who peaked his head out at him, or those two twin little boys he often heard below him as they played, they always laughed too loud, or the love birds above him, or that old Jewish woman at the bottom floor who always seemed a little terrified (who was the only other white woman in the building) and a lot of other unpleasant characters. Only one Chance had any fondness for was the woman who lived right across him, he of course didn’t know her name, and saw her rarely since she presumably worked, but she was quite, well behaved, at first Chance assumed the teenage boy who lived with her was her son she just have had real young, but after a rather awkward argument he got into with the kid, he found out she was actually his aunt, which sort of made Chance like her more, made her seem more pure and responsible (in multiple ways) she liked a few things about her. He liked her short masculine hair, a style only black girls could pull off really, he liked her feminine voice and how well put together she seemed for someone who clearly had little money. But... Every time he envisioned himself talking to her, he convinced himself otherwise. Once he saw her struggling to carry a large black bag of trash out, and he considered asking if he could help her, but then he got a vision of her, years later, walking down the street, and him catching a glance at her, going while holding the hand of a strangely pale child, after she had cut him out of her life. And Chance went back into his apartment. Mainly he liked to convince himself he was only fond of her

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because she had big breasts.

Besides, most women are deceitful anyway, even the quite polite ones with big breasts. Chance stretched and glanced at his bathroom, a shower? Nah, he normally only did that twice a week, he had a pretty dry body, so he didn't get terribly greasy hair by the end, germs be damned. Chance eyed the TV, thinking it through, he had lots of channels, but he used them very little. He actually had quite a lot, more than you'd think if you saw where he lived. Thing was, a long time ago when he had just turned 18, he moved in here, and couldn't afford it then, but now he could do a lot better for himself, not a house for a family better, but less 'food stamps' adjacent. He couldn't really see a reason to leave. 'What if I moved in somewhere better? What if I'm the worst person there, I like being somewhere I'm the best person on the block' is something he considered. Whatever reason, this was home. Chance sat down on his couch, leaving the TV alone and looking at his phone. He thought about practicing cooking again, cooking and baking. He'd been on that a while, a good whole actually. And the whole time he documented it on Facebook, making sure it the whole family saw what he was doing, most left very nice basic comments, one time his 'friend' Wayne (Who was his only friend on a site as old as Facebook) commented something snarky like 'I didn't know you were going full trad wife, who's the lucky man?' Chance pursed his lips and hearted the comment, he hearted them all, and always headlined every post with a picture of what he was cooking, and saying something very positive, always upbeat but with a sad undertone, like cooking was the only good thing Chance had going in life. Cooking was not a good thing in his life, and he hadn't been enjoying it. But it kept him focused. Like his own personal side hustle. Maybe tonight he'd make brownies? Yeah, he should, it'd take hours and he might have to come in to work tired, (would that make Patrick feel bad?) nah, no matter. He-

His cell rang, which actually made him scream as he was actively holding it in his hands, which then made him drop it right onto his naked foot, which made him scream again only now with some added cuss words.

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After giving his phone a nasty look, he picked it up and answered it without even looking at the ID, spam be damned. "Yeah!?" He said a little aggressively, there was a pause. "Ah, Hey Chance it's me." Chance before he could sign, he held it in, quieted his voice into a mumble, and sat down. It was Finn on the other, one of the boys that hung around Josh (which technically Chance was one of) if Chance had a gun with four fat bullets in it, and all his friends where in front of him and he had to spare one, it'd be Finn. Not really for any merit of his own, but out of Finn being the least rowdy, had a bit of a gossip habit, not only that but he was always going through women that where super thin and almost built like bricks, Chance had a hair of an idea Finn was homosexual. "Hey..." Chance said calmly, looking blankly at the wall. "Yeah, Saturday we're planning on going out to Mancy's for the game instead of Josh's place, I wanted to give ya a, you know, heads up!" Ah, yeah, he known what that meant. That meant Finn was warning him ahead of time so he could plan around it, and Chance wasn't supposed to tell anyone Finn told him. Sometimes Josh liked to not tell Chance the group was going out, and show up to his place randomly, and if Chance couldn't go, he'd harass Chance for weeks even months after giving him a hard time about it. For fun. "Why not at Josh's?" "I don't know, maybe something about his roommate. I don't know." Chance spread his legs and looked up at the ceiling, thinking for a moment then standing up from the couch, he'd really make those brownies after all. Maybe he'd even eat them too. "So yeah..." Finn added, Chance just walked to the kitchen and started grabbing stuff, had to hurry before it got too late. "I guess I'll head off here!" "Mhh." Chance mumbled, hearing a grown on the other side. "Later dude." Then the call ended, Chance laid his phone on the counter so he could see it later for when he wanted to look at the tutorial.

It was a text-based tutorial on a website rather than a video; he didn't like videos since someone's face being on screen seemed to distract him. After he laid everything, he'd immediately need out, he got too it.

It definitely took longer than he was planning. After a whole of preparing, it he set it in the oven for 25 minutes, he found it a little hard to stay awake that whole time. But he did. But when they did finally come out, they

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looked... Wrong. Even a little squishy. He tried one and it was very- well, it was the sort of thing you only ate if you were down in the dumps. A depression snack if you will. He just thrown it away. Signing and rubbing his left shoulder he started off to his bed, he tugged off his shirt and pants and was going to jump straight in, when he stopped. He couldn't just leave it undone like that.

Chance just stood there a while, his bones felt strangely heavy, but he regardless turned around and started off back into the kitchen and started back working on brownies again.

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CHAPTER 2: Chance

Days went on, things mostly stayed the same, as for the moment it was so early in the morning there wasn't even any light out. Chance laid awake in his bed, staring at the ceiling. No matter, it was Saturday.

It seemed to him, if he was going to do 'it' it was going to be now or ever. He'd been planning it for a long while, that's why he's been doing all of his cooking and such and specifically showing off what he was working on online, he was doing all of that for a reason. He was going to give everyone who had ever wronged him what they had coming, in the ways they deserved it. Not Equally, he couldn't really give someone who had been screwing him over for years what they had coming all at once in a way that wasn't over blown.

Maybe a lot of them deserved over blown. He looked down from the ceiling all the way to his hands resting on his stomach. If he did do it, he'd probably start today? No, too late, unless he really started with Josh- no no, that was all wrong. He was going to go from 'best' to worst. Who was best? He had been planning all this time, but he was not actually looking forward to the action of it, not like it was supposed to be fun, this is justice, not revenge after all. Well, best probably wasn't the boss, no it'd have to be Tracy. Maybe some people would say she meant well, but she didn't!

Chance grabbed onto his shirt the same way a child holds their blanket. 'All she ever does is judge, when it comes to me.' Chance thought, he almost wanted to shout it, making it more real. Yes, she'd have to be first, but what would it be in? What the plan actually was is to give the people in his life who had wronged him a very nice piece of the punishment they deserved, by feeding them tampered food. Just not in any sort of way they'd know it as they are, perhaps some of the food would come out tasting bad, which was why it was so important he became a good cook, as well as the second part of his plan, why he was posting on social media about his new

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found hobbit, if you wanted to call it that. Until now he never posted online, only reason he was there to see what others were up too. But now, he wanted people to see this. Stressing out important cooking and baking was too him, and how much he fussed and stressed over it, so if they came face to face to him, and he brought food he had made too them, it'd made the chances they would eat much more likely. He'd need the portions to be small enough there'd only be enough for one person, so the chosen target wouldn't share around the food with non-chosen peoples. He'd been thinking over this whole thing for a while, it almost felt like years and years to him. That was exactly the thing, people loved boning him over.

All things directly related to him and his life were a joke, he was a joke. It's not like he wanted this or asked for it. But here he was. And he could never directly confront anyone on it, every time he tried something horrible happened to him, directly fighting anything that touched him was a bear fatal mistake, so for most of his life he tried the 'the best attack is a defense' thick, but that had done him little odd. Keep him safe? Somewhat. But as far as he could tell, what was keeping him safe as he was now in life, was his age and increased maturity, his ego? Terrible. Was a man supposed to eat so much shit as he did? It wasn't literally as of people walked in front of his face and spat on him, more so it was like he had a giant 'kick me' sign on his back. And worse he let them. He let them. But what else could he do? Maybe others didn't mind getting treated this way, but he sure minded it. But maybe if there was anything to do, it was this. Would it make any sort of difference? No. It wouldn't even make a difference to Chance's perception, but that wouldn't matter, what would matter is he DID he back at them, and any justice is better than none.

Chance shrugged his nose then reached up and rubbed his eyes, he wasn't wearing any glasses because of course he was sleeping a while ago, but now he awake and had been a while, and had been staring into the ceiling for a while. He reached for his glasses and placed them on his face. He flung his legs over the edge of the bed and leaned up from the bed, he needed to get some things ready, he had plenty of things he used for baking, but now what he needed for tomorrow. He'd do ice cream, that

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seemed a good pick. He glanced at his cell phone; no way anywhere would be open this early. Chance looked out at the dark window outside, then laid back in bed.

Hours later, Chance was still awake in bed, he never got any sleep or even tried too, so he never even took off his clothing. The sky went from black to gray then too a dull young blue, by then he didn't even need to look at his phone, he got out of bed, he thought over taking a shower but decided against it, pulled on some proper clothing, mainly a thick jacket to wear over himself since he known it was going to be cold as Hell. Put on his boots and walked outside, he eyed the door as he left, making sure he actually locked it this time. Then he was off. The apartment was strangely quiet; it was almost a little haunting as Chance went down the stairs. His mind never wondered whenever he was outside of his apartment but still in the building, the whole place gave off the impression it wanted to pounce him and eat him alive. His hands fumbled inside of his jacket the whole time, but then when he reached the bottom of the stairs he paused for a moment. At the bottom of the stairs was that teenage boy who was the nephew of the woman who lived across Chance, whatever his name was (or hers for that matter) he wasn't sitting with anyone though, he was just there, alone. It was a bit of a weird sight given if anyone was ever there alone, it'd be some lonely old person.

The boy he was seen with the other teenagers before, but the other ones looked a little older and maybe even meaner then he was. Chance probably only starred at him for a moment, but the kid turned around to face him, and the kid gave him a nasty look, not looking away as they made the longest and most Hellish eye contact of all human history. Chance eventually looked away and started trying to walk past him, but as soon as Chance got off the stairs and was only about one or two feet ahead of him, he heard a voice from behind. "What are you starring at?!" The kid yelled a little louder then was necessary, making Chance cringe a little into himself, he turned to face him once again, and it almost seemed the kid cringed back when Chance turned around. The cringe in return the kid did actually had Chance thinking, if they got into a fight, who would win?

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Oh, Chance didn't get into fights, no not ever. Chance was nothing like his brother, he didn't use violence or the power of his body (or lack there of) to embarrass other men. But if they did get into a fight... Well firstly that wouldn't look so good on him. the kid was a lot younger then him, he looked like 15, Chance was 30, so that wouldn't be a very fair fight. The kid wasn't very heavy built, but he was a tank compared to Chance, he was bean shaped. Well, it's not like Chance ever won a fight in his life. Chance glanced to the floor. "Nothing..." "It looked like you were looking at something." The kid said again less strongly then the first, it actually had the unintended effect of calming Chance down because of how unsure it was, the more unsure the other person is, the more in control you are. "Just... Surprised to see someone sitting there this early." Then he turned around and kept on walking. In the back he heard the kid scuff out "Whatever man." In a vary snarky tone, Chance paid it no mind and opened the front door walking out into the cold morn.

The day felt a little colder than it really could be, in fact Chance seemed to feel cold a lot these days, he started to wonder if he was low in iron or deficient in any other way, maybe it was one of the downsides of being very skinny, less meat covering your bones, the colder your body will be. The people that where out seemed to duck back into their homes and buildings as soon as they stepped out, and the cars that drove past puffed out warm steam as they trooped by, if it wasn't for the awful smell it wouldn't have been so bad getting close to their warmth. Why Chance wasn't in his own car? He needed to think on the way, he could think in the car of course, but he had an intense thought process, he could barely focus on two things at once if thinking was involved, not because he'd lose track of his thoughts, but because he'd lose track on whatever the other task happened to be, and that was something you did not want to happen if you were driving. His thoughts where so strong it was totally impossible to think about anything important while another person was talking, unfortunately... Besides that, the cold did a good job in waking him up. What his mind was on mostly was how to get Tracy over for Sunday? He could go to her, but then would come the issue of her giving the food he made for her too someone else, and

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besides that the idea of handing her one thing of ice-cream after going all the way to her house would seem a little... Weird. Chance actually wanted to come off a little weird, but in an endearing way, a 'oh you poor thing' way. But he thought that would be done best if she came over. Maybe he could just ask her? She liked coming over but he never actually asked her too, he wished he had asked her too last night when she was already there, but he hadn't committed then. Well he was committing now. Out of a window across the street he saw a sad palish blue skinned woman staring at Chance go, he kept moving but it was hard to take off eye contact.

The longer he walked on, the more vaguely sick he felt, now that he thought about it, last time he actually ate something (besides trying out those brownies the first and second times, but those where only tastes after all) had been breakfast yesterday morning. He didn't eat a lot and you could tell given how thin he was- which if anything just a sign of just how much he didn't eat given he actually took on weight easily, both of his parents where always heavy set. No matter anyway, he'd eat when he got home, he'd just have to keep moving... He eventually got the store, it was open but no one else was inside except the workers, there were a few of the local tramps hanging about near the doors though. Inside strangely didn't feel any warmer to him, he pulled his jacket closer to himself and sunk his neck deeper in. The cashier at the front had an odd look about him. He almost seemed like the stereotypical good friend to all women, soft in the face, trimmed beard, piercing in his ears and bottom lip, but not terribly friendly looking, and not passive at all so the look was... He eyed the allies thinking on what he'd need to buy, he was making the ice cream from scratch of course. He wasn't exactly planning on doing ice cream for Tracy all that long ago but really given what he had 'lined up to put in' ice cream would work pretty ideally. Plus, she seemed like an ice cream person, she didn't seem the type to gobble up a whole red velvet cake on her own. No, she seemed more of a weight watcher. Though given the nasty bundle of curb she had at the bottom of her tummy, maybe she didn't watch it as well as she enjoyed watching Chance's every move. He signed, still not sure if he was seeing everything he needed, he didn't think on bringing his phone to actually look up if he had forgotten any ingredients-

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“Oh shit.” Chance said very out loud, getting a little unpleasant look from the cashier at the front. He had forgotten his wallet at home, no money, no doe, no service.

The day went by, nothing much to report. Chance sat on his couch, rubbing his back with a quite moan of pain every now and then, early when he went back to the store after forgetting his ‘fucking wallet’ he decided to just take the car this time, he was done thinking. But unfortunately, when coming back some asshole drove fast past Chance’s car almost running him over, and the jolt from his car suddenly stopped giving his upper back a weird nasty pain. He couldn’t help himself but repeatedly looked to the bathroom door and back to his abnormally (or normally) blank TV. Suddenly his cell phone rang, it actually gave him a bit of a nasty pain when he jolted.

Chance signed (as he was off to do as of late) and looked at his cell. It was Josh, “Ahh!” Chance moaned out loud and answered it, putting on a nice calm submissive voice. “Yeah?” “Heyyy, are you down to go to Mancy’s tonight? We’re already outside your apartment. Look out yo window!”

Chance made some noises, pretending to look out, he didn’t need to be known they were there. “Yeah, I can come.” “Great, then get your white ass down here!” And Josh hung up the phone, hearing Wayne’s annoying laugh in the background. Chance narrowed his eyes and nearly verbally growled. “What a fucking wigger.”

For a moment he thought about taking a super quick shower, just too piss him off making them wait, but no, he wouldn’t do that. Besides, eventually they would just drive off and the whole process of Josh bitching and making fun of him would happen again, only worse this time since it had actually been his fault. He signed, leaned up out of his chair, this time GRABBING his wallet, put on his boots and a light coat, and walked out the door. Before shutting the door, his head snapped ahead to the hallway, his creepy neighbor ahead of him on his line of the hall starred at him for a moment the slammed the door behind him. A chill ran through Chance’s spine as he shut his own door quietly. He walked through the hall, down the stairs, cringing a little when he got into the main hall, there was some of those teenagers again, two big boys and that younger teen from earlier in

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the day he spoke too. The two older teens gave Chance a stern look, the younger kid also looked a little mean (he always did when he was with his 'friends') but not as much, it was almost a little cute. Chance looked away real fast but it was already too late. One of them called out "It's that dude again." Chance just kept on walking, maybe tastefully a little faster, but unfortunately, they were too close to the door to be fully avoided. One of them stepped in front of the door straight in Chance's way. "Where are you going?" The guy in front of the door said, he was the tallest of the group, he was the only one dressed is anyway that could be considered respectable, no baggy clothes anyway, that and him being cartoonishly black, straight off the boat black. The other guy-the goon, seemed to be a mess, Chance could see him ODing behind a Taco Bell someday, and of course the kid. Chance just starred at the man in front, pursing his lips and glancing out the window. He couldn't see their car. He wondered if Josh could bail him out of this one.

The guy in front gave him a odd smile "Keeping to yourself then?" The goon laughed a little, Chance eyed the kid and he actually looked away when they made eye contact. "You don't talk a lot do you." Chance couldn't make eye contact anymore, so his eyes traveled down to his own feet. There was a moment of silence, until suddenly 'CLAP' and Chance jumped a little looking back up, the guy in the front clapped his hands together. "Say something dude!" He yelled, almost in a way that could be mistaken for friendliness. "Ahh..." The guy laughed a little. "English, bitch come on!" The goon laughed even more, even the kid giggled a little. Chance stepped back, making the guy and his goon go a little closer to him. "Come on, I'll settle for French. I speak a little Spanish, any of that?" Chance thought for something to say. "Hebrew?" "... I... Have somewhere to be?" The guy smiled even more. "Nice! You talk. But I am a little worried you got one of those... Oh, what's it called, come on those ah, that thing that makes you act retarded around other people, what's it called ahh..." "Autism?" The kid offered, he was a little fatherer back then the others. "Yeah! Yeah, that's it. I'm thinking you have that thing. You're a weird guy." Chance pursed his lips, and it made that guy burst out a big laugh.

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Oh my God, you do have it don't ya?" Chance glances out the window, eyes widening. It was Josh and Wayne walking beside each other to the building, Chance could almost breathe a sigh of relief in seeing them coming. Then Josh from a distance made eye contact with Chance, then Josh's eyes wondered over to the three teens in Chance's way, there was a brief moment of resignation... Then Josh turned around and started back to his car, Wayne following after him with a confused look on his face. Chance looked back to the teens in front of him, they were still laughing, apparently the idea of Chance being mentally ill in any sort of way was so hilarious they missed that whole thing, Chance could have screamed. Eventually they calmed down some, and the guy in front reached out to put his hand on Chance's shoulder. "Well, ha, that would explain it wouldn't it?" "...What?" The goon laughed again, but the guy in front only smiled and shook his head. "You being weird. You're a weird guy chance you're a very weird guy, seems you like staring at people too. That's what we've noticed." Chance looked back at the door, then said "I don't mean to stare at anyone. I have to leave." He tried to step away to the side, but the guy blocked him again, Chance frowned, voice deepening. "I have to leave." "Woah, okay than!" The guy looked to his goon, the goon making an odd face, sort of if you mixed fear, laughter and sexual excitement all in one look. "Where?" Chance tried to get some words out, but he couldn't, simply trying to sidestep him again but was once again blocked. "I'm just asking man." Chance was starting to think that guy would look great in a Livelink video. "I'm..." "Yeah?" "...Going to dinner." "Alone?" "No." "Ahh! Ha, okay what's his name?" "...I have to go." Once again, all three of them started laughing, but this time when they all went on laughing, Chance was able to slip by that guy, basically squeezing himself between him and the wall,

slipping out the doors and into the cold night. The freedom was great, he expected to be hunted down as soon as he slipped out, but he wasn't happy for very long, as soon as he noticed Josh's car was gone... "... Son of a fucking bitch."

We would have loved to just go back in his home, and sleep off this awful day, after all he had important things to do tomorrow, and he needed to

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make a call to Tracy after all, but that apparently something that wasn't on the table, given there was three unpleasant issues still right by the door. At least he had his keys.

It didn't take him that long to drive to the bar, he of course known where it was, he'd been there a lot of times, but everything he did seemed to drag on as of late. Once he had parked his car he jogged out and practically burst into the bar. Chance huffed for a moment looking for them, he looked round for a moment, then he saw them, they were far away in the corner, strange thing was Josh, Wayne, William, and Daniel were sitting together, but Finn was on a nearby table. Chance walked over slowly, still wearing his jacket, he walked until he stood right in front of their tables, he known Josh knew he was there, granted Josh didn't actually look at him, but he knew that he was there, Finally Josh looked up at him and raised an eyebrow, laughing a little. "Oh, hey there Chance, I was wondering why you hadn't come." Chance just kept on staring at him. The silence seemed to go on forever, the colors in the bar was muted and yellow, a dark ugly modern Hollywood color. It could seem a little unappealing but on a good night it could come off homely, but this wasn't exactly a good night for Chance. "We were waiting on you Chance. But I'm glad you came." Josh smiled at him, Chance turned to look at Wayne, who made no expression in particular. Chance pursed his lips and sat down on the same table Finn sat at, Josh seemed to frown-only a little- when he did. Suddenly Chance noticed, they were all sitting far away

He had been out two hours and a half with them, though it felt longer. By the time he drove back to the apartment block he was sure the kids would be gone by now, and he was right, they weren't in sight. In fact, no one was. Chance walked in, getting a weird look from the person at the front. Went up the stairs and through the hallway to his front door and... Chance cringed when he stuck his keys into the holes, it locked, it was supposed to unlock. Chance pulled his key out and tried the knob, and quite easily the door opened. "Oh..."

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CHAPTER 3: Tracy

He tried her phone last night, but nothing came of it, she must have been asleep, it was deep in the night, anyway. Disturbingly early in the morning, his cell rang, Chance didn't jump out of his sleep, more so was slowly drug out of it. He reached his cranky, hairy arm out and grabbed the cell phone, turning it on before even looking at the ID (those spam calls were going to get him one of those days) "Hey Chance!" It was Tracy, Chance's eyes perked open, he quickly put on his glasses and started slipping on a shirt, even though the phone he never wanted too to be seen in a state of undress around another person. "Hey..." Chance started; Tracy leads the call for him-

"Hey... Well, you called me last night, I can't remember you ever doing that before. Is everything okay?"

Oh... Yeah well, I wanted to ask you about something...

"What is it?"

"I was wondering if you could come over here today? If you had the time of course."

"Oh, sure. I don't care too. What's going on?"

"Well- ah, you know how I've been cooking a lot, making food and all..."

"Yes."

"I need someone- who isn't me, to try my food for me, I've made some ice cream last night, it's in the fridge. And I... Don't have anyone else to ask... I hate to ask you since I know your probably busy and all, you always seem busy when you come over but it would mean a lot to me..."

"... Oh, of course! I'd love too."

"Thank you."

"No, of course I'd love too, thank you for asking me, I'm flattered! What time

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should I be over?!”

“Thank you Tracy. Ah, how about five? I don’t care, I’ll be home all day, so come whenever you want, I’ll be here.”

“I’ll be there then! Thank you so much for asking me, can I bring the kids too?”

“Oh- ah, can you uh, not please? I don’t want....”

“ ...”

“...People I don’t know tasting it, no offense... Sorry...”

“No, it’s fine, I’ll be there!”

“Thank you.”

“See you then, little bro.”

“Bye, thanks again.”

“Bye-Bye!”

Chance breathed in deeply, moved the phone father away to the very edge of the desk, pulled off his shirt and laid down his glasses on the desk as well and curled back into the sheets, shutting his eyes almost painfully. He known he had to get on that immediately so the ice cream would be reasonably frozen by the time she got here, but it was almost like he didn’t need to commit. He didn’t need to do this. He didn’t NEED too. No no, it wasn’t anything like that. Butttt... Chance got the vision he’d gotten many times before, a vision of himself lying flat like a block of glass, arms and legs at odd angles like a Russian animated paper doll, a tasteful pool of dark red blood under all sides of him. He laid on the ground directly under his window from the apartment. Maybe a few people would walk by before someone had the decency to call the police, what would the max amount of people who could see him lying there and do nothing be? Hard to say in a place like this. But any which way it wasn’t a pretty sight. Death was one thing, sometimes even looking a little sexy in a curtain light, like a super model who was now 50 years old. What wasn’t sexy, was what if he lived? And he became a cripple, and he lived off snap for the rest of his life? What if he after that he actually needed Tracy for help? Or once he actually needed the help, she’d run off. It often seemed to turn out that way, doesn’t it?

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Chance roiled up out of bed and for the second time pulled up his shirt, put on his glasses and started walking around his room looking for clothes to wear, he then walked over to the bathroom and stepped into the shower (finally). The shower head hung strangely low and because Chance was a tall man, he had to stand at a odd angle to get hit by the water. Chance looked down at his legs and with a little surprise noticed there was a pink stream going down his leg, apparently, he got a bad cut between going there and getting in. Chance rubbed his leg with his other foot. After the shower was over, he tried off, then pulled on his clothes and walked out immediately going to the kitchen. He found if he got right too something, instead of waiting around resting after a shower, it went faster since he got a lot more tired if he rested after a shower, if he kept moving, he was able to walk it off. He laid out everything he'd need to make it tool wise in front of him, feeling almost a little proud when he noticed how dark it was still outside, then he got a vison of him making this for his children and husband on the weekend, wearing an apron, hair pulled back. Then he cringed. Ingredients! He had milk, sugar (and lots of it, more then was needed) vanilla and lots of whipping cream, the heavy kind. Of course, his (special ingredient) was for later when it was more prepared, as in already frozen. He placed the milk, heavy cream and super into a (sadly) small pot on strove, turned the heater on and slowly turned it for a while. Normally this would be a perfect time for him to think (though he did have a nasty habit of losing track of his secondary task if he got too deep into his own thoughts) but his mind was strangely empty at the moment, which was something he noticed. Maybe he had thought so much, there wasn't anything more he could add on now. He must have really been at the end of his rope after all.

it cooked and cooked until the super was visually no more, then Chance poured everything in the pot to a large cup, put in the vanilla, and then walked over to his fridge carefully and put it in the freezer. It wasn't going to freeze overnight because there wasn't time, but maybe he could still make it work by the time she got here, he'd need to put it in the ice cream maker quickly before she got here and put it back in the freezer, he really screwed the porch when it came to timing, he hoped it came out decent.

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He had plenty of time between then and now, so he stretched some, then walked back to bed. He didn't get back to sleep admittedly, since soon after he laid down, he could hear the lovebirds right above his apartment arguing about something, rather loudly in fact, Chance felt like his ears needed massaged... A few hours past, it was fully day now, not exactly bright though, it hadn't seemed bright in quite a long time. Chance got out of bed once again, finding that he never actually took off his glasses went hopped back in. He looked over them, finding they didn't seem that bent, though it surely wasn't good for the hedges... He walked out to the kitchen, peaking at the ice cream for a moment, yeah, it was getting there. Chance was really kicking himself for not doing this sooner, the ability to focus was not one of Chance's strong suits. Having nothing else to do, he sat down on his couch and turned on the TV, he flipped through streaming services, not really finding anything of note, eventually just putting on some real old movie about boxing couch catches up in a lie. But not soon after the movie started, he was scrolling on his phone, at once point even watching a video on his phone while the TV was still going. He didn't need to focus on that anyway, wasn't Sunday the perfect day to be lazy anyway? After the movie ended, Chance didn't bother putting on anything else, he just turned it off and went off to the bathroom, sitting on the toilet while scrolling again for an offensively long time. It was mindless space that needed to be used up anyway. Then Chance remembered, his mail might be at the front desk by now, if he had it. A long time ago mailed used to be delivered directly to people in the apartments, but then some violent innocent happened, and a month later something of that sort happened again, now if you wanted to get your mail you had to go to the front desk and ask for it, like a child asking for their things before school.

Chance got out of the bathroom, left his phone on the table desk, and was out. That creepy guy across the hall didn't peak out from his door this time. Chance turned to lock his door (for real this time) but when he heard a noise right behind him, he turned around fast. Chance made eye contact with someone, he blinked and saw who it was. It was that woman who lived right across from him, she was currently holding the door at him and looking right at him. Chance looked away after slow pause and started off

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walking down the hall. “Oh- ha, sorry.” She said, laughing a little, still in-between the hallway and her apartment. Chance turned to her but couldn’t quite make eye contact again. “Ha...” Chance awkwardly moaned, she cringed a little at him. “You surprised me! I’m not sure I’ve ever seen you on a Sunday.” She said, in a surprisingly friendly tone, still with that slightly cringing face, it was like she was talking to a mentally disabled child, Chance didn’t mind it none. “Sorry.” “Nah!” She waved a hand at him, and shut the door behind herself, leaving them both in the hallway. “What’s your name anyway? All this time I never got your name.” Chance raised a eyebrow, was actually knowing your neighbors something anyone around here cared for? “Oh, I’m Claudia Mont.” “...Chance Sailer...” and to his own surprise he reached out his hand for her to shake, but unfortunately, he held it out oddly, palm facing upward in a ridged way. Regardless she took it and they shook. “I knew a white woman by Sailer once actually! That was in Washington though, maybe you two are related?” Chance shrugged and tried at a smile, but it didn’t quite work out, if he was related to a woman in Washington he would never know if it was on his mom’s side. He thought this ‘Claudia Mont’ woman had a very unusual name. But sort of fitting in a weird way, it fit her strange looking aura, a little outsider. “Maybe, who knows. I don’t know a lot of my family.”

“Oh, well you know how it is. Can’t control other people.” She shrugged, then started to walk past him. “Sorry to run off, I have too... Find someone, but it was nice talking to you.” “Ah... Bye.” “Later!” And she waved at him then started through the hall and down the stairs. Chance cringed, waiting there for a second for her to get nicely far away from him before he went on.

It got dark very soon there, it was just that time of year. Chance had his eye on the clock the whole day, a hour before she would get there (unless she got a wild hair for coming earlier, maybe he should have been more hardnosed about the date she wanted her in here, it wasn’t like she needed a invite to come here.) he took the-clearly not frozen long enough-ice

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cream mix and put it into his ice-cream maker, he brought the thing not that long ago, only used it once, he hadn't practiced on ice cream much, more so dinner foods and more bready deserts, he had a plan on making crab make for a very special someone, but he had only looked into making that, and still had no real experience on it. Then he put the mix in, it wasn't a big batch since he only really wanted her to eat it, but there would be lots of extra regardless, so the whole mixing process would take about 30 minutes. And as he waited, by the end of that it seemed to actually be a whole hour. While he waited, he sat in silence, he thought a lot about meeting the woman across the hall-Claudia. 'Sounds like the name an evil stepmother would have' Chance thought, maybe she was like an evil stepmother, who knows how she treated the kid she lived with. He wondered if she treated everyone like how she treated him in the hallway that morning, if she didn't maybe she liked him, even a little. 'That wouldn't be so bad' Chance thought and he leaned back in his couch, eyeing the ice cream maker, the machine's design seemed a little stupid, childish even, like what people in the 1950s though the world was going to look like by now, in hindsight a far cry from what was realistic, but one thing you could say about now ah days then what they were planning, the artistic tastes looked a whole lot better. When the ice-cream maker was done, Chance took 'the goods' out and put them into a bowl and back in the freezer, they had so little time to get cold again before she popped up. 'She better be alone!'

A full eleven passed after five, she still wasn't there. Chance stared at the door, like instead of her knocking, she was just going to pop her head in, but of course that's not what was really going to really happen. He heard two little knocks on the door, and the second he heard those little noises he hopped out of the couch, fists clenched together. He marched over to the door and put on a little smile, looking a little scared and opened the door. There was Tracy, she pushed up her glasses and smiled wide at him, she was strangely well dressed coming here, sort of made Chance looked a little trashy, he did go out of his way to wear an overly large coat, because it made him look a little more childish, but granted she saw him like a child anyway regardless of anything he did. "Hey Chance! Are you cold in there

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for something?” Chance shrugged and stepped aside, letting her walk inside before that weird guy across the hall started looking at them.

Tracy kept smiling at him as she went over to sit down on the couch at the far end, petting the other end of the couch. “Your house looks nice! Have you been cleaning?” “No...” Chance looks over to the kitchen. “Oh, well congrats on getting a girlfriend Chance!” She laughed, as he ignored her and walked into the kitchen. “I’m going to get it ready.” Chance said, very unemotive, if you heard that sound bite out of context, you’d probably think he was getting a body ready at the morgue. “Sure! I’ll wait here!” Chance got too it. He pulled the ice cream out of the fridge, it was surprisingly uncool, but there was nothing to do about it now. He got it out, and while it was still in the freezer he reached into the cabinet and pulled out a small vile, which didn’t even have a lid over it, but it was bit in there somewhat recently, and tipped it over the whole bowl, slowly the content in the vile slide out until it was empty. Instead of putting the now empty bottle in the sink for washing later, he reached up and put it back in the cabinet. He was going to wash it, he needed it for later projects, but he couldn’t be washing it right now and he didn’t want Tracy to see it, she probably wouldn’t think anything of it, but still just to be on the safe side. Chance took out a spoon and mixed the whole thing together. He kept the lion’s share of the substance he put in on one side, the side he was going to section off to give to her. Then when he was done mixing he put a decent portion of the mixture into a smaller more pretty bowl, and smothered it out making it more appealing. By the end it was looking very nice, it was a tasteful yellowish cream white, smooth top, inside of a bubblegum pink bowl. Even though it couldn’t go in a cone like he wanted, it was still very lovely in the end. Which was the goal, beautiful on the outside. Chance picked up the bowl and walked it over to what could be called the living room where she sat, she smiled and reached out her hands,

taking it thankfully. “That looks so good! I love vanilla! I was hoping it was strawberry, but this is second best!” “Maybe I should have asked...” “No, it’s best to go basic when you’re just trying something out.” Tracy paused, pursing her lips for a second then looking up with a little laugh. “Do you

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expect me to eat this with my hands?" "Oh..." Chance looked embarrassed then the second he turned away, grimaced. He went back over to the kitchen and rummaged through the cabinets for an appropriate spoon that wasn't too poorly washed, he settled on one and started back to the living room, handing it too her. "That is the smallest spoon I've ever seen." She mused, looking at it like it was genuinely interesting. "I-I can get a different one." "No, it's fine." She looked at her ice cream again, eying it like it was either truly special, or slightly suspicious. 'Just eat it, you dumb bitch!' Chance wanted to call out. "How long did it take you to make this?" "Oh, maybe ah, a day. I wanted it fresh for you." "Well thank you, it does look fresh. I like that it doesn't seem too stiff, or cold or what have you." She stabbed the food with her spoon but then pulled it out without actually scooping up any to eat, breaking the virginal look. "Almost makes me think of a smoothie, but a little firmer." "Try it." He said, more coldly than he meant, she glanced up at him, and he made a sinking, worried face. "I really want to know what you think." Then she gave him that look, that look she sometimes wore. He remembered the first time he had ever seen her like that. It was an awful night, it was their father's 70th birthday, they were eating out, it was just him, Chance, Tracy, and the middle child, Zach. Zach and Chance had grown up together, but Tracy didn't know them at all. Zach was sort of ruining everything, making every little fucking thing about himself naturally, so when he got up to go to the bathroom, everyone practically signed.

If you were the sort, you could almost feel bad for him, when he left he almost looked depressed, like he was well aware everyone couldn't stand him. The conversation was going fine, Chance was going out of his way not to say anything or make a big deal out of being there. Father was having one of his good days, which at the time Chance didn't understand since he known him not very well at that point, but some days he was more upbeat and talkative, others he was quiet, slow, forgetful, and spoke little. Father was chatting to Tracy mostly about some of the adventures he went on in his later adult years, Tracy was close to him when she was little, then he left her life for a long time, Father was barely in Chance's and Zach's lives growing up either, but sometime recently, he seemed to realize he wanted

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to go to Heaven when he died, so he made an effort to be more in his kids' lives, too late, as well as in a weird awkward way. Then the conversation shifted, Father moved on to Chance's mother. Zach had a different mother than Chance, but for a long time Chance and Zach were both only being raised (or should he say, lived with?) by Chance's mother. Father cringed "That woman!" He said, a little too loud for public. "Was a mean one, let me tell you how evil she is." Then it went from awkward to awful, horrible even. He started telling Tracy, and anyone too close to hear, every horrible thing Chance never wanted anyone to know about him, while making eye contact with him! Things that in Chance's mind shouldn't even be spoken in the dead of night far away from him, was being said right in front of him. And after all of that, Tracy looked at Chance too, and she just... Gave him that horrible look, that awful nasty helpless look, like he was a mentally ill. The look she was giving him now reminded him of that look all that time ago, Chance looked away, he couldn't hide his expression from her.

"Please, eat." Tracy nodded and laughed a little as she stuck her spoon in, pulled it up, and ate it. She actually ate that bite really quickly, and went in for another fast, didn't she ever worry about a brain freeze? On her third bite she took it with a nod then said "This is really good! Of course-"she went in for another bite "Everything is better homemade. How long have you been making ice cream?" "A while. I've trying at the perfect mixture." He lied. "Well, it's really good." She was eating it very fast, Chance watched her closely, mostly he watched the food itself, for anything that could be considered abnormal or unwanted, to see if she saw it herself. She wouldn't because neither did he. It was practically invisible, at least in this state, maybe if it was poured on top of a cone, it could be seeable, but mixed in? No. "I guess you like making cakes more?" "Ah, I've been making a lot of things." "I've seen. You're a very good cook. Doesn't this take some sort of machine to mix or something?" "A ice cream maker." "Oh. So does it do all of the work then?" "... "Aren't you going to have any?" "No... I hate dinner recently." "Early bed then?" "Yeah..." "Early bird catches the worm!" She went on eating, Chance finally looked away from her, he had been watching her the whole time and was now getting worried that would start to freak her out if she noticed. "I wish I had brought everyone with me- oh

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maybe not the kids. I mean no offense, but it's not the most... Friendly place here." Chance nodded. She started scraping around her bowl, and to Chance's mild horror, she actually started to lick the bowl clean after. Who'd think she was that childish? She smiled at him. "I think I owe you a dinner now. Want to go out?" He looked at her, then looked away pulling his hand through his hair. He didn't want to go out, he'd just tell her he didn't have the money for it, but if she was paying then that wasn't really going to work. Maybe he'd say he had a headache?

"Well..." Chance eyed the bowl and smiled a little. What Tracy didn't know, was when he was preparing her ice cream, he added a small vile of his own spit, then mixed it in. He made the spit not that long before Tracy was going to come. He known she wouldn't be able to taste the spit when in a high amount like that because he hadn't eaten anything all day preparing for that, as well as brushing his teeth and using mouth wash religiously for a week ahead of time. It was about tampering with the food as much as possible without her knowing. Chance smiled even more, he was very hungry after all. "Sure." Tracy grinned and practically threw Chance up from the couch, holding him by the arm. They walked out of the room and apartment block into the night. What Tracy wouldn't know that back in Chance's apartment, in his bedroom, hidden in a drawer by his bed side was a letter addressed to her, along with six other letters. One wouldn't be reading for a while, but when she eventually did, she practically couldn't even process what she was hearing, overcome with grief. What the letter said was:

To Tracy.

From Chance:

On September 28th, 2025, you came to my apartment after I invited you over to try out ice cream. That ice cream was made just for you. When I prepared it for you, I filled it with a vile as long as my palm and as wide as a quarter, with my own saliva. Then I mixed it in with the ice cream and gave it to you. And you ate it. I did this because of the constant disrespect you gave me. You treated me like a child, regardless of me constantly trying to

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hint that I despise this. I am not the family retard, we are not friends, I am not your child should not be treated as such, we're barely even siblings. That is why I did it.

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Chapter 4: Boss

He written a letter to his boss to but had to crush it up after things didn't turn out how he planned, it was.... Very embarrassing. Chance didn't dignify his boss with a name. He never liked the guy, but he liked the guy a whole lot less after he practically spat in Patrick's face. The boss was never nice to Chance, he was sort of a tech guy, and probably very smart (or at least he had the papers to prove it, not so much the practice) he was an older fellow, 50 something, and was in the game for a very long time, his whole adulthood. And it seemed he didn't feel the need to try hard anymore. How he got into lab work well Chance wasn't so sure, he owned a third of the lab's profits anyway, maybe it was that big Covid boom money that did it for him. He had an alright personality most of the time, but God he could turn his nose sometimes. When Josh brought Chance in to work there, but before Josh had decided to leave. Chance had come into the office, there the boss sat, looking slightly confused at him, half holding a file. The boss was a short but thick man, muscular, he looked like the type to have fake sprayed hair but that wasn't the case, he was very much so bolding with gray hair. He wasn't bad looking though, definitely seemed like the type to have a 20-year-old tall blonde titty type, but his wife was reasonably aged to him (granted there might have been a few hennies on the side.) "So, your Chance Sailors. On time, not bad." He reached out and shook Chance's hand; it hurt his arm actually making him cringe away when it was over. "Good to be here." "Yes. So, Josh wanted you in here, your friends then?" "Yes..." "Alright, well you don't have any experience in this field, so don't expect this to be a long-term thing. And Jesus Christ you're tall." Chance could only really nod, not even a smile. "I'd lose the glasses though; you look a little." And the boss waved his arms around for a moment, trying to come up with the word. "Psycho." Chance nodded to that too, like a (fucking) retard. The boss smiled at that. "No one will see you anyway, so that's alright. But I expect you to be careful with everything

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we have here, I already told Josh to explain everything to you in great detail, so don't worry on that. But now, don't take this as any offense- "He sat down in his big rolling chair, it made an unpleasant sound as he sat. "I'm saying this because I respect you, as a man. But I've done a little digging on you. And I know you were in foster care a long time ago. And I respect you getting where you are today, very American. But I also know how a lot of that sort is, and I'm telling you now- "and he pointed right at Chance, gesturing him to sit down which he forgotten to do so until now, so when he did, they became eye level. "I swear to God if you steal anything, I will know it's you, and if you do, I'm not only firing you and making sure that's on your record, but you're also paying ten times whatever it is you took. I've dealt with this before and it's a pain in the ass getting some of these assets back, some are made in Europe and Asia. I'm looking past the foster care issue, but you can understand my worry." Chance just stared, he was in the foster care system for such a small amount of time, he barely even thought about it, it was like eating a salad once and getting called a vegan years later. That time was so short, and bizarrely pleasant in comparison.

That wasn't so bad, it was... An uncomfortable first visit. But fine. Slowly over time his mood worsened to the boss as these unpleasant comments were made here and there, then he heard rumor after rumor his job was getting cut when it never was. Then a promotion never came after working there a while, even when he worked without any medical benefits (not that he wanted that, long term wasn't in his sights) and things worsened much more when his pay was held back, slowly over time, pay would be a day late, then three days, then a week. He tried going to him a few times about this, but it never once got better, and that look, he always looked at him like he was an entitled brat, asking for so much effort for so little money. All of that was one thing, but then he acted poorly to Patrick, that's what got the boss on the list.

In the lab there was Chance and Patrick, Patrick prepping samples whole Chance worked on the computer, their natural domestic setup. Then the boss walked in. He was leaving the office (early as always)

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The boss just sort of looked them over a bit, Patrick didn't see him immediately, but when he noticed him, he quickly said "Hey! Going out?" Boss said "Yeah, just thought I'd step in, I wanted to tell you about that raise real quick." "Oh! Let me just finish this-" "No..." The boss said slowly, eyeing Chance like they were both in on some joke, one Chance wasn't aware of in any case. "I can tell you here." "Ah You're not getting it." He said coldly, tapping his fingers on the side of the wall in a song like way. "I have no clue where you got the idea, you'd get a promotion this early into your time here, but this isn't some no name place. You're not a hot shot here Pat, we appreciate your work and all, but if I just went around promoting anyone I liked, it'd be a disaster. We prioritize seniority here. Just wanted to get that over with." Boss signed, waving at him. "See ya." Then he was out, shutting the door behind him. Patrick stared wide eyed at the spot where the boss had been, blushing even. Chance watched his expression as his own transformed into something strange. Surely the other workers heard that, sense the boss had said that where everyone could hear in the hallway. Not only that, but the boss had called him Pat, Patrick hated that nickname, made him think of 'it's Pat'. Patrick turned to look at Chance briefly, but when he saw Chance's face, his own went from shock and embarrassment to something... Odd. He turned back to his own work, and after a moment so did Chance.

Chance wanted to get the boss over with quickly, but in total out of everyone he had planned, the boss was actually going to be the second trickiest to deal with. Only because he wasn't close to his boss in anyway, and he surely didn't see any of his fawning social media posts about his stupid little hobbie, and if he did he surely didn't care. So he'd need to come up with something clever. One of the things we know about his boss was his love for a particular type of wine.

It was an expensive brand, way out of Chance's budget, but he'd do anything for this project. Wine was the only possible way to get boss to ingest anything. It was out of his style, but that it was what it was. The reason he knew his boss liked wine was because Josh talked about how he actually drove out to buy it for him from a special store (for a little bonus

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of course, Josh was no one's arron boy) Chance brought the wine the very night he went out eating with Tracy, after she had left and had a slightly awkward, definitely tortoisés chat. Chance went to the store and brought one nice big bottle of the oh so special wine. It was a long ass drive so by the time he got back it was late. Problem, the lid was covered with a fancy red and golden paper lid. No problem. It took a long time, and by a long time exactly it was 46 minutes. He worked on it while listening to the TV in the background, wearing nothing but his underwear and glasses sitting on the couch, he slowly pulled the covering off while crumbling it as little as possible. It was already naturally uneven, but he still needed it too look as normal as possible. Once he carefully removed it without cracking it anywhere, he simply opened it, poured it out a little into a glass, then added the special ingredient. Shutting the lid extra tight and of course putting the covering back on which took forever once again. He was making great progress at the least, in fact he'd be able to give it to him next morning, and he had a great idea for how to give it to the boss as well... The next day was a fairly bright day given how things had been lately. Chance went off to work with a pep in his step. Giving the whole way with a smile.

Chance went into work same as ever; he made an effort not to seem overly happy or unhappy since he wanted to come off a normal as ever. Of course he had a little extra thing along with him, it was a bottle of wine, the same he had worked on last night. It was looking exactly the same as any other bottle. He went into the lab sitting the bottle by his chair and desk. If anyone asked him why he took that too work, he'd give them an honest answer, it was for the boss. How offensive would that be to anyone? Later Patrick came in, he seemed both tired and happy, like if you spent a whole night playing video games as a teenager with friends. Chance would have thought he felt the same, since he was pleased with his work so far, and he hadn't slept much, but after a seconds thought he realized that in fact was not how he felt. He should have been much more tired; in truth he was nothing but energized. Not like a child going to the playground or better yet a fair, but like a man, determined he and his men were going to win this battle. He slept better, and he felt more at peace with Tracy in fact, he

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planned on seeing her a little as possible, so no more unpleasantness could happen, no more bad feelings. The way everything should be. Patrick says hi when he came up, but beyond that they didn't speak much to each other. But as the hours went on, Chance got more and more nervous about the boss not showing up, what if he already did, but for whatever reason there could be he missed it and now he brought in that nasty beautiful bottle for no reason. That would be awful. Slowly Chance stopped trying and looked over to Patrick, he wondered for a moment what it would have been like to work with Patrick during Covid, would have been a lot busier, but maybe that wasn't so bad? Chance opened his mouth, shut it in thought, then opened his trap back up. "Hey Patrick?" "Yeah?" Patrick said, friendly but not actually looking at Chance while they spoke, he seemed very busy and all.

"Is the boss coming in today?" "Not sure, I assume so. Maybe ahh... He's doing something else, who knows. Why?" "I... have something I need to give to him..." there was a long pause, Patrick totally stopped everything he was doing with his hands, but he did not actually look at Chance, eventually he got back to work, but when he spoke again it wasn't with any hesitation or malicious, his conscience pure tone did wonders for the nerves that was for sure. "Really?" "Yeah." "Ha, what is it?" "It's wine." "Wine?" "Yes..." Maybe you don't know, not that you would, but Josh, the guy who worked here before you, he used to buy him wine sometimes, as a favor you know. So I thought I'd.... Give him a gift." There was a moment of quiet laughter from Patrick as he shook his head. "You're too nice for this world." Chance turned to look at Patrick, eyes a little wide brow raised, but of course Patrick wasn't looking back at him. Everything great Patrick did, he himself never took any notice of. The boss was not quick coming in. It was getting a lot later in the day, it wasn't quite dark out but the sky sure was getting a tone to it. It was actually close to time for Chance to leave, but he wasn't going to yet. Then the front door opened, and Chance's ears had been perked for a while, so he known it wasn't anyone leaving. Chance practically jumped out of his chair and ran out the room rolling into the hallway like a cartoon character (good thing Patrick wasn't in the room to see that.) Right as Chance round the corner, there was the boss. He

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seemed oddly chipper for the time of day; older people always got worse as the bad went on. He was smiling but only a little, when he noticed Chance standing there clearly waiting for him, he raised an eyebrow, but the smile didn't fade, cool as a cucumber. "Yeah?" The boss started. "I ahh..." 'this is weirder than I thought it was going to be' Chance breathed in then said, "It's your birthday soon, right?"

The boss raised an eyebrow. "In two months." "Oh... Well, uh-" Chance lifted up the wine bottle. "I got this for you, I know you like the ah, brand and all, because Josh used to fetch it for you.... Remember?" The boss just looked at him for a moment, this time Chance stuttered for real. "I was in that area anyway, you know, an early gift?..." it really was more awkward than he had planned. Boss shrugged and took the bottle from him. "Well thanks for the gift, but it just isn't not my birthday, I don't drink wine!" His face went from annoyed to Santa Claus levels of pink cheeks and laughing. Chance's face fell hard which only made the boss laugh more, perhaps father up the hall from of those young gossip horny women were peaking their heads out to see this. "Don't look so glum ha ha! My wife is the one who drinks this crap!" He reached over and patted Chance on the back a few times, making him flinch a few. "But she'll be happy to see this, she's been drinking less and bitching a lot more, so maybe if I bring this home tonight, she'll not club me over the head for once. I used to ask Josh to get this stuff for her so I could tell her I drove out myself to do that, so you're really making me a hero tonight!" He gave Chance a few more pats on the back then walked on down the hall laughing, while still holding the wine... Chance stood there like a shell-shocked Tommy.

After that... Unfortunately, he needed to re-write the letter he had planned for his boss, and since he did it by hand that was a big pain in his ass. It took him a while to express what exactly he wanted to say, given the odd facts of this case.

When the boss did read this letter, he wasn't actually reading it himself, in fact a police officer read it off for him as well as the Boss's wife, the boss just sat there in the fold out chair, eyes wide mouth tight, until his wife screamed.

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Here's how the letter went:

To Manse Morrissey

From Chance:

On September 29th, 2025, I gave you a bottle of wine that was meant for you, but instead you gave it to your wife. Half of a quarter of the wine was my own urine, mixed in. Whether or not she drank it all or shared it with others, I do not know, but any unpleasantness she will feel hearing this was meant for you, so I recommend you do not tell her. You are a deeply unpleasant man, you don't pay me on time, you laugh at him when I ask you too, and you treated my friend Patrick poorly. That's why the wine was for you. That is why I did it.

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Chapter 5: Claudia

Sometimes things went fast, sometimes they go slow. It was going slow. The night Chance had to re-write that letter to his boss he had stayed awake all night and the whole day after (since it was a workday after all) and since then his sleep had been all off, when he was going to cook again, he wasn't quite sure. He might have thought about it vaguely here and there, but nothing all that meaningful. Work was mighty boring, he even saw a lot less of Patrick, for whatever reason even when they saw each other they spoke very little. At one point he had to dodge seeing Tracy since he knew he was going to pop up at his house again soon, and he wanted to see as little of her as humanly possible (God willing). He did do a little baking, not much. Only reason he did so was to post it on social media, that was an important part of the whole plan after all, he even ate it this time. He made lasagna and finished the whole thing in one night, it was impressive how he could eat so little sometimes, then go full pig at others. Things went by pretty fast, then Friday hit and everything went fast again. It first got a little weird in the morning, and by morning exactly it was 4:30, so not exactly a great time. Chance just so happened to be awake, he was laying on his bed in nothing but underwear and his glasses, he stared up at the ceiling thoughts going through his head so meaningless there's no need to report them here. He could go back to sleep at some point, he wasn't the type to be forced out of sleep at a certain point of being awake too long, but he found looking at his cell phone or watching TV did lock him out of dream world for the next 24. It seemed to be something about technology for whatever reason. Either way he laid there, eyes wide open. When from across the room he heard his phone ring, he looked at for or a moment turning his head to see it, he thought on it a moment, it was probably nothing, but just in case it was might as well peak.

Chance swung one hairy leg over the bed, then the other, and stood up,

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slowly walking over to the cabinet that had the phone on top of it, he picked up the phone and saw a blurred image of a text, and it said it was from... Patrick? Chance raised an eyebrow and put in his phone password, 08,20,19, and looked at the text, it said: 'Hey man, can you come in on Saturday? You don't have too long; I could just really use the help since I have some extra samples to do. Not sure when you'll see this text, or if I even used the right number. It's about reporting I don't know a lot on that, sorry man, I know I already owe you.'

Chance raised an eyebrow but then started typing quickly, sending the simple and very tasteful message 'I will be there.' Chance walked over to his bed and sat down, staring at his phone very innocently with two hands holding it at once. He didn't expect an answer back, maybe a like, but Chance was taken quite a back then the symbol for typing showed up.

Waiting for the apparent new felt like a million years, but when it did come, it read as follows: 'Woah dude you replied fast! That's insane.' Chance sank into his bed deeper, legs twitching. Was that a mistake sending that message so fast? At this time at night? Was it because he was up so late that made it weird? Why was he up? Why was it weird to reply quickly if he just happened to see it quickly? He known Patrick meant that friendly, because that's how he always was, but what did this mean? Because there wasn't any clear path forward, Chance stared at it for nearly ten more minutes, laid down in bed holding the phone until he finally put it away and got some sleep a good while later, though it wasn't easy because of shoe long he had been looking at the dumb device. He got up extra early, but he felt like Hell, eyes sagging lower than an old woman's chest, his dragging to where he was always almost getting caught of things, everything about him was horribly off, he would have taken a shower since it had been so long, but he couldn't see the good sense in doing it now, it was just too damn early, he wouldn't have showered if he was meeting Jesus that evening. The drama in his mind over his recent failure with the boss haunted him worse than being in Hill House. But what was there to do now? Chance thrown over a jacket, drank a tiny bit of water then walked out, making sure

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to actually lock it this time. As he was just about to turn to the hall, he heard a loud thump in front of him and jumped like a startled cat. He turned over to the hall, confused at what he was looking at as it was some woman's butt a few feet away from him, all across the floor was many many DVDs and blue rays scattered about, empty box by the woman's side. Then she turned around to reveal it was Claudia! 'Things sure did have a strange way of working out' he thought. She turned around and looked at him.

"Oh, hey." The first word she said was pleasant, the second was frustrated. All over the floor was DVDs she probably dropped, and across the hall was her brother Chance had just noticed. "Eh..." Chance cringed, biting at his lip and walked over to the two and started grabbing DVDs, she looked at him, eyebrow raised a light smile on her lip, but she didn't say anything as he started picking them up one by one, he placed them into the box quickly, and he just so happened to go a lot faster than the two of them, actually the kid started going a lot faster when Chance started, but he never quite got to Chance's level. Once they were all off the floor Chance made them neater and more placed them into the box, Claudia reached out her hands for the box, but he gave it to the kid instead, and he looked very surprised because of that, but took it none the less. When Chance looked over to Claudia her hands where on her hips, eyebrow raised with a half-smile half frown, it was a very odd look to pin down. "Thank you, you're an angel." Chance nodded and she laughed, Chance cringed away a little, he glanced at the kid who seemed very put out by him, 'well, I'm a little put out by you too, shit head' Chance thought. Chance didn't mean to just nod at that, he just meant it as a simple response, maybe a smile would have been better? Well, he didn't feel like smiling. But in all fairness, he sure wasn't an angel. "Ha. I dropped these, there heaven then they looked." Claudia eyed the teen, then looked back to Chance.

Chance breathed in a moment, he didn't really want to, but he thought at this point it was the only polite thing he could do. "What are you up too?" She smiled "Just handing over some things to my mom, she used to own a lot of those, giving them back to her." She looked over to the kid and patted him on the head "And he's helping me! Though maybe next time I should just go ahead and ask you!" The kid gave Chance another nasty look, but

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at this point Chance was just ignoring it, the teenager was powerless with Claudia around it seemed.

“Going to work I guess?” Chance nodded. “I guessed so, because of how your dressed.” She must have been refusing to the scrubs beneath his jacket. “Just pulling in extra hours.” She nodded. “Yeah, money hasn’t been a thing lately, hasn’t it... Well, I have to get the car started.” She turned away and started down the hall, giving Chance one last look that was surprisingly kind, almost like one Patrick would give him, it was in a different way, different vibe even.

As she was walking away, he noticed how the kid didn’t go quite with her, started off like he was going too, but he kept his eyes on Chance, and then when she was out of sight, he walked up a little too close to Chance and whispered “Man, stay away from my sister!” Chance pursed his lips and narrowed his eyes, normally he would have moved back a little, but for whatever reason he felt compelled not too. “...What do you mean?” “You know what I mean nigga!” The kid said stepping a little closer, something about the hushed way he let out that threat was almost a little endearing. “Listen kid-“ “Don’t call me kid!” “...” “I’m Drako, not kid.” ‘Drako?’ Chance thought. ‘Is that even a real name?’ his lip raised a little which made Drako go a little red, his mouth opened up getting ready to release some unpleasant stream of violent words, but then from down the stairs a woman’s voice called out “Get down here!” the kid eyed Chance hard, trying to see if Chance would make some sort of unpleasant expression, but when nothing happened the kid started down the stairs and disappeared. Chance just stared ahead blankly into nothing, he needed to wait a while for them to get out of here, he didn’t want to see her again today, if he did that might mean he was stalking her or something. He already weirded out someone else today, why add onto it? After a while Chance went down the stairs, got into his car, and drove off through the town. The oddly foggy town, for whatever reason everything had a ugly look to it today, for a while he thought that was just because he had gotten up so early things were just looking weird, but as the day marched on it started to look just plain foggy. He got to work, and waiting outside was

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Patrick leaning against the building, having a smoke, he looked beat even from this far away. Chance parked his car in the same place he always did, away from anyone else's car so no one hit the car (longer walk, but worth it.) Got out and started over to Patrick.

Patrick noticed him only after he got very close, and it actually gave him a pretty big shock, making him jump back a bit, and when Chance saw that he walked past a bit, when Patrick jumped back, he dropped his cig onto the ground. Patrick catches his breath and when he looked down at the cig he cussed. "Shit!" Chance frowned and walked away even more. "I-I'm sorry." "No no." Patrick waved at him, rubbing his hair. "It's my fault for not looking around me, I probably freaked you out." "No." Chance let that word out awkwardly but Patrick didn't seem to notice it, it almost looked like he was considering picking it back up for use, but then just let it go, stomping it with his foot before taking it to the trash bin near the front door, Chance followed him a good bit away, like a beaten dog. "Hey, I really appreciate you coming out here for me, I know you could just do those reports on Monday, but if it takes that long I'm going to be so messed up. You're a life saver." Chance nodded, but when he realized Patrick wouldn't have seen that as he was ahead, he mumbled "No problem." (Though granted maybe he didn't even hear that in the first place.) Patrick opened the door, unlocking it, and they stepped inside. With no one else there it looked a lot different then it normally did, very white, even creepy, like a old, abandoned hospital, or something else unpleasant like that. They went over to the lab and got to work, Patrick had to get his part started with and take them out of the fridge, then while he did that Chance got the report papers on the computer read, and printed them out, not filling in any of the blanks of course as Patrick wasn't done any. Chance just waited in his seat while Patrick was looking at the results, every sample was its own case and needed to be treated with carefully, often times they were drug tests, and a positive or negative could matter to someone's very life going forward, oh how labs have been sued over getting a test wrong. That is Hell on Earth.

Chance was very quiet for a long time, once they there in a unpleasant waiting period, Patrick turned over to chance, leaning his arms against the

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desk behind him, he'd probably look a lot 'cooler' and 'sexier, if he wasn't so short. "I really can't thank you enough." Chance glanced over at him, then turned his chair so they were both facing each other. "Nah..." "Ah, well everyone in this city is a shit head. No offense." Chance just nodded at that, so true. A slight disturbance came over Chance, he really wasn't as good of a person as Patrick thought, and everyone else saw him as a doormat evidently. And given the fact he failed at a task as simple as pissing in someone's drink, that seemed to be true. Getting revenge wasn't as easy as he thought it was.

"I hate how long that thing takes." Patrick pointed to the fridge behind him, Chance nodded. If it wasn't for that fridge taking forever to freeze anything perfectly, then they could have done it yesterday. Not that Chance minded, any excuse to make Patrick's life easier was worth it. Maybe that was it, I mean, if he could do well by Patrick, maybe there was so worth in it all after all, all all all... "Hello?" Patrick asked, and Chance's eyes snapped back to him, he was lost in his own thoughts again. "Oh, sorry about that... Just thinking." Patrick shrugged. They were able to go home very quickly that day, because it wasn't even a full workday in the first place.

When Chance was driving back home, he had a lot to crew over in his mind. Mainly about how to move on. It wasn't that he couldn't stop, but he felt like he needed to move on, he promised he would. Get back at everyone, all those smudge bastards, (All of them?) no, not all of them, but the main, biggest figures in his life's many sufferings. Maybe if he wanted to be more logical about it he'd just beat the shit out of everyone, probably in the same day so there wouldn't be any time for him to get taken into custody, given how the police where in this city he could be a free man for at least a week, maybe he'd always get away with it, a lot of people who committed some pretty nasty crimes got away with it. Crimes like stealing someone's car wasn't treated like a big deal. But a car is very often someone's lively hood, their path to freedom. Stealing it is no small deal. Chance sneered at the thought, those thrives, murderers, bullies, terrorists, rapists, gang lords, so on, he'd poison them all if he could, and in those ways they all deserved too, each according to their own wrong doings. He

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supposed he was playing god in this hypocritical, good people like Patrick would probably look down on him badly if he known, but it wasn't like the real God was doing anything about it! That was another thing, Chance known a lot of people in his youth who enjoyed calling themselves atheists back when it was more fashionable, but in hindsight they were just coping with the awful idea God didn't care about them, but that was silly, it was like saying you biologically don't have a father because your dad left your life. No, the real honest truth was God left Chance to deal with the world he was born into, he'd poison God too if he had the chance, but he didn't, so he only had other people to play with. Chance breathed in and looked out the window for a moment at all the people passing by on the side of the road. Patrick surely would not approve of any of this.

That was something Chance hadn't considered a lot till now, but it was true. Maybe he could convince him otherwise if they had a long talk about it, but in all honesty if that happened Patrick would probably just end up showing him the real truth of what was going on here. What would that be? Patrick saw everything so much clearer than Chance did, maybe his eyes were just more plain, his brain more logically, and most likely of all his heart pure. But WHAT would he tell Chance? Chance turned back to the lonely road, everything seemed too gray that day, it was what Chance liked to think of as a 'suicide day' because it was the sort of atmosphere that made you want to escape it in any way possible, logically the best way to do that would be to just drive out of town for a day or two, better than blowing your brains out, but when you are depressed, your mind does weird things. Makes you take the most self-destructive route, because when you're depressed you see yourself for who you really are, a monster. 'Everyone is a monster' thought Chance, he almost actually said it out loud but- "Oh..." Chance mumbled out breathlessly. He had an idea on what Patrick would tell him if he knew. He would probably say something like- "Hey, that sounds really crazy. Sort of interesting you planned this all out, and I'm very flattered you didn't put me on that list, you're a real good friend Chance. But the thing here is, what makes you think you didn't deserve what everyone does to you? I mean why'd you spit in your sister's ice cream, and piss in the bosses' wine? Sure, she is a nag, and he is an asshole, for

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sure for sure, but what gave you the right to do that? She was just looking out for you, and he's just a hard-nosed boss trying to run a tight ship. And I really don't appreciate you bringing me up in that letter you sent to him, don't you think the police have that? Now I'm connected. You know what I think Chance? Don't take this personal I think you're a real good friend-

But you deserved it." "...I deserved it." Chance said out loud. And it was true, he didn't need to start off on those two, they were basically innocent, why did he have to treat them so poorly? Everyone else he has in mind, not actually very well planned out, they had it coming much more- but so what? What made him special? A lot of people get screwed over by others in life; they don't go around getting petty revenge with spit and piss. And he let other people walk all over him, that was his own damn fault, for being such a manlet. He needed to give up the ghost on this, maybe give his life into a new radical detection, something new and unknown. He wished there was some sort of crazy group he could join, like the weather underground or something. Full of weirdos he could let ruin his life, maybe plant a few bombs, start a few failed riots, get crabs at packed love ins, then die in an explosion. That would actually be an almost beautiful way for him to go. Because at the very least he wouldn't be alone. The figures by the side of the road kept catching his eyes, and something about them was really depressing, he supposed it was for two reasons. Firstly, they were always alone, second was that they always seemed to have some clear defect. Either they were too fat, too skinny, too slutly dressed or too poorly dressed. Clearly homeless or drug addicted, or both. But could be expected? It was an ugly nasty, empty yet wet bloated little town. Maybe somewhere far away, there was a natural, rooted, beautiful place in this country full of happy faces. But Chance never saw it. Even as a kid the natural places he went were awfully depressing, white trash, maybe even evil. It was even- Beep! Beep! Chance's phone went off, he signed not wanting to pick it up, but he couldn't really imagine who'd it be that wasn't someone he'd want to get to quickly (unless it was spam, by God) so he reached into his pocket, one hand on the wheel one holding up the phone, then answered.

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“Hey?” “Hey man.” It was Josh. He sounded very sly, and that tone meant nothing but trouble. “What do you want?” “Ha, are you mad or something?” “...No.” “On your period?” “...” “Ha! Ha! Ha!” “... What do you need?” “Chill out, I just want to know what you’re doing right now.” “...” “So what are you doing right now, old Chancey boy!” “I’m driving home from work.” “On a Saturday?” “Yeah...” “Dude. Well anyway you’ll never guess where me and the others are!” “...” “Guess.” “Macey’s?” “No, we’re at the dump.”

Then just like that, the phone cut out. “Shit!” Chance cringed slamming his phone down on the floor of the car harder then he should have. Josh must have turned off his phone. Chance known what he had to do, he drove a little further, then parked on the side of the road, and turned the car and started off in a new direction.

There was only one dump in town (if you didn’t consider the whole place a dump) so Chance known where it was. He wondered if the whole gang was there? He didn’t hear anyone in the background, he only heard Josh.

By the time he got there it was a little darker in the sky, but not terribly so. There wasn’t exactly a proper place to park his car so he just left it beside a sand pile across from the road. Chance stepped out and looked around. And clear as day there was Josh’s car, windows rolled down in a very blanketed showing of unconscious suicidal wish for your car to be stolen, or worse, someone trying to go in while you’re already in there. The question was where was he? And why was he here? Something weird, that was for sure. Chance paced around, thinking, waiting for something to pop up. He looked over to the gate, the whole dump was fenced off, he himself had never really been this close to it before so seeing it here was a bit weird, odd how many things are close to you, and yet you never really notice them. Chance reached out his hand to the fence when suddenly something blared him his face “HEY CHANCE!” Chance screamed jumping back, hands out reached to fist fight any new attackers. Then there was loud laughter and out came Josh and Wayne. Chance breathed in and felt like yelling at them, but of course he didn’t.

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At this moment those two were looking like Dr Frankenstein and his assistant or whatever in the movie. Josh being Frankenstein just more American, and frat boy, and Wayne being the assistant, given he was short and ugly. "What do you want?" "Jump the fence, Wayne's cousin who works here told him about something really fucked up, and we thought it would be great if you came to see if too, we've already seen it." "Isn't jumping the fence illegal?" "Just do it!" Josh started walking off with Wayne following behind him. Chance called out to him, but he wasn't heard, seems he has to jump the fence, but he didn't really know how too, this wasn't something he known a lot on, he wasn't a very physical person, so this was very new to him. He put one foot on the fence and with his hands lifted himself on it, like a skinny tick lacking onto a dog, he cringed the whole time worrying he'd fall off, the higher he got on the fence the more he was worried he'd fall in a painful way, maybe he's top would fall but his feet would stay on the fence causing him to bend in a awful pose. Either way once he got to the top turning the other way wasn't any easier, he was glad the two had walked off otherwise he'd know they start picking at him, the jarring tops of the fence poked at his upper thigh and crouch. Going down went a little faster, he could have jumped down but his nerves were too shot for that, he was far from Rambo it seemed. He eventually did get back onto the beautiful, beautiful ground and went off where those two freaks would be. After turning a courier on a trash pile, he saw Josh and Wayne standing next to each other whispering, when they saw Chance they stopped, and both smiled the same smile at the same time like demonic twins. "What is it?" Josh jerked his head begging himself at that question. Chance got closer and saw something ahead of them was laying on the ground. The closer he got the slower he walked until he was at a full creep, eyes dimming and dimming more.

"...Huh?" Was all Chance could get out. "A bunch of dead pigs got dumped here, I have no idea why, but see that thing over there?" Josh pointed to the farthest end of the dead pigs was pile, where a very nasty pile of dark red and bright yellow gore laid, no actual body in sight, it looked more like if you gutted a cow and left everything else on the ground. Chance looked

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back to Josh, shrugging his shoulders. "That was a pig's body. Wayne hit that with a sick and it exploded! It was the grossest thing!" Chance looked back to the gore pile, now that he was looking at it again, where those hooves berried in that mush? Chance stepped back a little, he was catching on to why they brought him here. "I don't want too." Josh smiled, and Wayne hid a laugh as he walked behind Chance and started patting him on the back, but soon the pats became more aggressive and Wayne was slowly pushing him forward, Chance could have fought it if he wanted too, after all Wayne was Chance's height when he was eleven. But no... "No man it would look awesome, I want to film you kicking those things, you have boots on, right?" Josh glanced down, seeing that Chance didn't have his boots on. "Whatever, anyway I'll give you twenty bucks." "... " Chance just frowned at him. "It shouldn't take that long; it's not like you're going home to anything interesting. Unless you're hiding some sort of bodies in your apartment." Chance tried moving to the side but suddenly Josh put his hand down hard on Chance's chest, a little breath huffing out of his lips. "I don't want to." Chance said, he didn't sound particularly manly in the moment. "It's twenty free bucks dude!" Chance frowned his brows, he'd run away maybe if they weren't both blocking him, and Josh still had a hold on his chest. But then again, he probably wouldn't, that wouldn't be a good idea he'd get caught on the fence because he was too slow going up and down it. "Why do you want to film that anyway? Your 30."

Josh gave him a very, very unpleasant look, and Wayne went totally quiet. And just like that, Chance was gently let go, and he started walking to the pig pile ahead of him.

It was not a pleasant sight, not all of them popped very well, one of them wouldn't at all, and all he managed to do was bent in the gray skin, he wasn't sure, but it seemed like dead meat wouldn't burse, he'd have to look that up later. After doing five pig bodies and only getting one really good pop, splattering all over his legs all the way up to his crouth. Wayne handed him the same stick he had used a while ago to hit them, and it made the popping a lot bigger, Josh seemed disappointed he wasn't using his legs, but the pop was a lot better. Chance's face was blank the whole time,

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almost getting a sneer out of him when a bit of pig gore slide into his shoes. The whole time Josh eyed him with an almost predatory look, his laughs went from somewhat lighthearted, too deeper and longer. That was what really made Chance sneer. 'That's it.' Chance thought, eyes going dimmer. 'He's really going to get it now.'

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Father

Speaking of his father, he hadn't seen him in a while. He wanted to get straight to Josh, but firstly he had to go to his father. Maybe his father was in some sense, done a lot worse to Chance than Josh could ever even try (unless the bastard actually got him killed for real someday.) but in Chance's eyes, his father wasn't a bad guy. For one, he was so old at this point he wasn't exactly responsible for his own actions, at least right now, so getting revenge now wouldn't be the fairest thing. When Chance met up with him as a adult, his father was always kind to him, he spoke well too him and about him. Even though he had a horrible, horrible habit of telling people things about Chance he never wanted anyone to know, that never had anything to do with Chance himself as a person. As far as his father's mind would go, he seemed interested in what Chance was up too, his job, future plans, so on. And everyone in his father's life now seemed to like him a whole lot, he cleaned himself up a while ago, got clean of booze and women, started going to Church, he went back to work proper but that didn't last too long as he got too old at a certain point. Around where he lived he even befriended a local murder of crows, who came down to his porch to eat what he had laid out, which was apparently a difficult thing to get done. All around he seemed like a likeable person, the sort you would enjoy living around, and Chance did truly respect that. But he still had to pay, not really for anything he had ever done to Chance, but what he hadn't done, leaving him with Chance's mother, he liked to complain in hindsight,

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about how awful she was, but that never stopped him from leaving Chance alone with her. Chance wasn't mad at him, out of everyone on his list, he liked him the most, but that didn't leave the guilt. His father never even said sorry but being a piece of the reason, his life was ruined. Maybe a sorry would have stopped this from coming, maybe not.

A week had passed since that odd event with Josh and Wayne, he hadn't seen heads or tails of Claudia, and there wasn't much to report on with work, he sort of started to feel a little weird on the wine trick he had passed onto his boss. Mainly he started to get worried that his boss's wife would be able to taste the piss in her drink, he didn't think most people would notice, but if your used to a certain type of alcoholic drink, and something (Especially something very unnatural to drink) is added to it, that might be very clear. But he heard nothing on it, so he tried not to worry so much, but it was hard he had to admit, he was thinking about it. It was night, a somewhat bright one, everyone seemed to have their lights on in their buildings and apartments. Tomorrow, he had a special meal planned, one he had been working on a lot (since it wasn't an easy food to make, maybe it wasn't hard for other people to make, but it was for him, he wasn't exactly in his trad wife era.) But first, he needed to see if his dad was willing to see him that day. He known Sunday was off the table since he went to Church for morning and evening service, and he took that very seriously. Thursday was off the table too, at least for the evening, because they had a prayer meeting then so that was that. So, for now, it was Friday at night, and he wanted to see if his dad was willing to visit with him tomorrow. Well, more like Chancing seeing him, because even if his dad was somewhat willing and able to come over here, he didn't think in all honestly it would be safe for an elderly white man to come over to this part of town. Chance got out his cell phone from by the counter where it was charging, scrolled for a while until he found his father's number, then pressed it and waited for him to answer. He waited and waited, until it went to voice mail. He wasn't surprised, his dad often took a while to pick up a phone. So, he tried it again, hoping he wasn't (God forbid) on the toilet.

It rang and rang, then nothing happened, Chance frowned his brow, he

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signed and stared at the phone a moment, maybe he'd call back at any moment. He signed then called again, waiting and waiting, 'oh my God he must be on the toilet' Chance thought, cringing. Then- 'Ding' "Hello?" It was dad, in his signature raspy low-pitched voice, same old dad. He signed in relief now and leaned back onto the counter. "Hey dad, it's me Chance." "Ah... How are you?" "I'm good, I wanted to ask you something..." "Eh?" "Are you doing anything tomorrow?" "Well, ahh... No, I-I don't think so. Eh, why?"

"Well, you know how I've been cooking lately?" "No." "... "Oh wait, yeah yeah Maybe. Your sister Tracy, she ah, might have mentioned something like that to me. What of it?" "...I wanted to ask you if you wanted to try something I made? I've been sharing it around with people." "What is it?" "Crab Cake." "Crab Cake? What's that?" "Oh, it's- you know, a bready sort of food. Soft, it's very good." "Eh..." "I think you'll like it, I want your opinion on it." "Well eh..." "Please." "Mhh..." "Please dad." "... "..." "Okay Chance. I will. But eh, when?" "I can come tomorrow, what time would be best for you?" "Well you sure seem excited, uhh... how about around- no wait I might not be awake. Or done with breakfast. How about you come around... Two?" "Two, okay that sounds great. It takes a while for me to drive over there anyway. "We can do it later." "No no, two is fine. I really appreciate this." "Okay, if it ah, means a lot to you." "Thanks." "Right, well uh, see you then?" "Yeah, see you." "Goodbye." "Bye." Chance hung up the phone, sitting it down on the counter top, he didn't need to look at it again for a while, not unless anyone called him or anything, he was going to need to make the crab cake itself, but he wanted to wait a bit as he wanted it as fresh as possible, driving to dad was over an hour so he'd need to plan ahead for this. He would probably make the actual food early in the morning, like 6 AM type early, it didn't actually take that long to make crab cake, he might have to reheat it at his dad's place if he'd let him, it could be eaten cold, but he didn't want to do that, he didn't think the food would taste very good, even if its tampering wasn't detected, the goal wasn't to make the actual food taste bad, if it did that was only a byproduct. Tomorrow... First though, he needed to go to the bathroom. He pulled off his shirt and laid it on his bed, grabbed an empty jar, cleaned it spotless in the sink, the

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walked off into the bathroom and shut the door behind him.

He didn't sleep very well, it was a dark night, and his eyes hung heavy on his face, he felt sick, stomach turning, like he was going to vomit again, he cringed and pulled his legs up closer into his own body, he was shivering a little when suddenly his eyes shot open, it was still dark out, he almost shut his eyes again but he looked over to the clock across the room, it took a second for him to make it out, but it said it was 5:40. Chance sighed, he knew that meant he should get out of bed and get that food ready. It wasn't a long meal to make, but he wanted to be done ahead of time by a lot, as well as it took a while to drive over there, so against Chance's own will he swung his legs over the side of the bed and lifted himself out of there. He looked over to the fridge and felt a little weird in his stomach, was he going to vomit for real? There shouldn't be anything in there anyway, that's insane. Then again Chance was always prone to sickness, sicknesses of all kinds actually. Chance looked down, he was wearing nothing but his underwear, and since he was going to go and see his dad, and his dad was a pretty formal guy, he thought it best to take a shower. He walked into the bathroom, eyeing the toilet with something that could be considered desire, then he glanced over to the door, he forgot to shut it, he did then stepped into the shower, thrown his underwear across the room and turned on the shower, very cold water came out and hit his back making Chance jump back, if that was anyway to wake a person up, it was this. The way he felt in his stomach and back was so bad, if he was a woman he might actually cry. After he got out of the shower dried off, slipped on some casual clothing, then looked over to the kitchen. What he really wanted to do was slip back into bed, after all he didn't think father would mind so much, he didn't seem to care about the time and of course, Chance could just call him and say he got busy or slept in late or feeling bad.

He got out half a pound of crab meat, only one sort, got mayonnaise, egg, onion-that really green and ugly looking sort. Some bizarre plant food called tarragon (Chance hated its taste, but it came out weird without it.) red pepper and salt. There were other things he could have added but didn't. He mixed it very briefly, he didn't want it coming out too weird in the bowl, too

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runny. He added the crab into the mix then added crackers and mixed all that into the bowl too. Then, it was time for him to add in the special ingredient, he walked off into his bedroom and walked over back to the kitchen, he didn't worry about it being cold since the whole goal of it wasn't supposed to taste or be good, once he actually looked at what he had, he thought he might have had too much of it... So, he only added half of it to the mix, then he took what he had left, wanted over to the bathroom and dropped it into the toilet then flushed it down, he gave the jar a quick rinse in the bathroom but left it there for now, he wasn't worried about it at the moment. Then he went back to the bowl and mixed in the special ingredient with what he already had made. Chance was still worried about if he added too much... In fact, he might need to eat one himself when it was done but... No, no it wasn't for him. He got out the pan and put butter on the pan and let it warm up a little. Then he took the mix and with his (very clean) hands he rolled them into little balls, about five in total, then he laid them into the pan just as it was starting to heat up. It made a loud sizzling sound. It didn't take that long for them to be done, and by the end of it, when they were crispy on both ends and not in the middle, they looked very good. You wouldn't even know, you wouldn't even know.

Chance sighed and placed his hands into his hips, he should have felt accomplished but that wasn't really hitting him yet, but in all fairness his stomach wasn't in as much pain anymore so that was pretty nice. Suddenly Chance jumped back gasping a little, there was a slight jiggle on his doorknob. Someone was trying to get in. "Who there!?" Chance called out. He jiggling stopped and suddenly he heard someone running away from his apartment door, his guts twisted into knots and his mouth went dry. He quietly asked "...Hello?" But no one replied back, of course. He breathed in close and stepped back from the door even more. The door was locked, of course. But regardless, what if he had not locked that door when he was going in yesterday? Like how he had been forgetting when he left the apartment. 'What the Hell was that?' Chance thought. He wanted over to the couch and sat down, never keeping his eyes off of the door. Was it that creepy neighbor near him? That sounded about right, but he couldn't be sure. He wasn't sure about anything, this day was a mess. He needed to

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get his mind off of that door thing, if such a thing was possible. What was he going to wear? He looked down at himself, he was wearing a black long sleeve shirt and brown pants, probably fine? Yeah, he'd go in with his proper boots, he'd look fine. In truth he didn't want to go out, he wasn't very eager to do with revenge, he was feeling sick, and whenever he saw his dad he felt very... Drained. It was always stressful, even if his dad didn't mean it too feel like that. Either way, whoever got to his door, and if he wanted to go or not, he had to go and get on that. He stood up, walked over to his bedroom and pulled on his boots. Then went into the kitchen and pulled the crab cake out of the fridge, it naturally wasn't even cold given since he had the door scare and spent a while staring at it, it was only around ten minutes. He opened the door very slowly and eyed it for a while. He gulped.

Finally, he manned up and walked out the door, looking down the hall with a cringing expression. No one was there, eager to get out of there he speeded out of the hallway and practically ran down the stairs, he was going so fast he almost ran into someone but stopped himself right before he did. She turned to him quickly, eyes wide, Chance's eyes were a little wide too. It was that old Jewish woman who lived in the apartment block, she was very small and appeared exactly like a deer in the headlights. "I'm sorry, wasn't looking where I was going..." Chance slowly turned to the side of the woman away from the steps, beside here very close, was the goon. It was that teenager who was with 'Drako' and that more well dressed teenager, the goon was the most 'hood' looking one. Very trashy. He gave Chance a very nasty look but didn't say anything. Neither did the old Jewish woman, so Chance just nodded at her and he paced past them and quickly went out of the main room and though the parking zone where he practically jumped into his car, locking it, putting the crab cake into the passenger seat, and started the car going off. Only as soon as the car was going, purring like a little kitten when its mother is dying, did Chance realize he really needed to pee. Well, it was too late now anyway.

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Driving there wasn't the fastest thing in the world naturally, everything seemed to go very slowly, that was part of driving when he had nothing to think on. For Chance, thinking was just as entertaining as watching TV. He had a very fast mind that it went in many places. If Chance was more educated- or even wise, maybe he'd be able to use that brain of his for something good. He only went to high school (did well in it) and he never really read any books or got any other sort of educational context, so there wasn't a lot for his mind to crew on that wasn't from his own life experience, but that experience sure did have a lot in it. He didn't really need to think about what he was going to do with his dad, it was very morally clear for him, and regardless of his personal feelings on his dad as a person, the choice was clear.

So there wasn't a lot for him to do, if he was an audiobook or music person, he would have been listening to that, but he wasn't. The only sort of entertainment he liked was TV. Beyond that, well... So not much to report. The color of the sky slowly changed, from that pretty baby morning, then into a more pleasant mature blue color. The area dad lived in was actually outside of the city, more grassy and suburbia. It was still not the most beautiful place but eh- to put it more clearly, it wasn't exactly a Bob Ross painting, but it was a Hell of a lot nicer than the city. After Chance was in the general area he known dad lived in, came an unexpected thought. '... Wait, where exactly does he live?' Chance had been to his house before, but only once. And it was his brother Zach he had drove him there. And Zach was such a pain in the ass the whole time he wasn't really paying attention where the house was, plus even if he had he had only been there once. He remembered what the house looked like but... There was no getting around it. He started driving slowly block through block, trying to make out his house. He was mostly very confused on that, but all the while he took note of things around him. Like how most of the houses didn't have any people around, but the ones that did, well the scenes were very pleasant. Old women sitting on chairs, some with grandkids, others with pets. Once he saw a heavily pregnant woman watering her grass on the front lawn, a vaguely bored yet calm expression on her face. He saw two

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young boys throwing a ball at a dog while the dog tried to catch the toy with its mouth. And of course, the standard 'man on a lawn mower with a brightly colored shirt' you always saw on Saturdays like this. It was all very pleasant and very normal, but in a size sort of way. Chance's mind kept going back to the little boys playing with the dogs, he kept thinking what it would be like to be them, growing up here. Growing up here with dad.

Of course dad didn't live here when Chance was growing up, actually he lived in a place more like where Chance lived now, at least that's what he got from stories he'd been told, but still, maybe if he had cared about him even a little, things could have been a Hell of a lot more like this then it was. "Ah!" Chance signed, he saw the house in the distance, it was a little blocked by a tree so he wasn't completely sure until he was basically parked right in front of the house. The house had a peachy white body colored, and a baby blue roof, very wholesome. Chance's mind kept stopped the car and breathed in a moment, eyeing the crab cake now a lot less appealing then it was hours ago. Chance was reminded that he hadn't eaten all day, but then he actually thought about what was in that food and felt a little sick. Even if it wasn't for the special ingredient he still wouldn't eat it because it had crab in it, and crabs were just sea bugs. Chance picked up the wrapped food and opened his car door and stepped out, the air felt nice and old, maybe he should have left the window open... He walked down the sidewalk and up to the door knocking a few times. After a moment he knocked again when he got no reply. "Dad!" Chance called as he knocked a third time. "It's me!" Chance glanced to his side and saw a man looking at him with a suspicious look from another yard, once their eyes met the man looked away and soon Chance's followed. Now he felt like a weirdo, maybe a bloody murderer coming to take advantage of this weak old man. Chance knocked yet again. The door opened, and there he saw. Chance's old man. His face hanging low, eyes that sort of resembled an Italian's, or someone with MG. Hair almost fully gone, high riding clothing, and thick white socks on his feet. He used to be tall a long, long time ago, but now he was average American male height. He didn't smile exactly but he gave his son a pleasant look. "Hey kid. How are you?" Chance smiled. "Hey..."

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Dad stepped aside and said "Get in here, it's cold." It really wasn't that cold, and in fact Chance quite liked it, but he did as he was told and stepped inside, dad closing the door behind them. The whole house was very pretty, maybe a little too pretty for a male only household, but at the least he kept it very clean. Most of the walls were green, the couch was also green, even the curtains were a light green. It was just a very green house. Chance turned to him. "I'm going to have to reheat this... I hope you're hungry." Dad shrugged and started walking back to the couch, it was then Chance noticed the TV was playing, and from what he could hear he believed it was gun smoke that was on. "Yeah I'm hungry I guess. Anything I don't eat, you can just have, ha ha..." Chance smiled at him, but dad didn't see it as he was still walking to the couch, it took a while for him to get there. "I don't think I'll eat anything, the drive here got me sick I think..." "Eh-Hope you're not coming down with something." Dad mumbled. "I don't want to get sick again, last time it was eh- not so good on me." "Right... Well I'm going to get it ready." Dad sat down on the couch and nodded. Signing deeply and then gave Chance a little nod and smile. "Sure- oh and uh, if you wouldn't mind, grab me the ketchup and a coke in the fridge, if that crab stuff is bread, I want that with it." "It's like a breed yeah..." Chance turned to go in the kitchen at the same time dad looked at the TV. Chance got into the kitchen and immediately cringed when he saw the microwave, it was very small, too small for the plate he brought the crab cake on in, he unwrapped the plate and found a paper plate and placed each cake onto the paper plate, looking over them real quickly, then he placed them into the microwave and turned the dial up to a minute. While he waited he stared at it eagerly, hoping he wouldn't start smelling anything unpleasant reheating inside of it, leaving a bad odor in the air.

Sometimes the smell of something unpleasant is worse than the taste. The second the timer stopped he swung the door open and grabbed the plate putting it under his nose. It didn't smell... Great. And he known from making crab cakes before that it should smell a lot better. But it wasn't out right awful. It wasn't as bad as say, a wet diaper left out in the hot sun in July. But it wasn't exactly reminding Chance he hadn't eaten either. Still his

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dad was old, maybe he wouldn't notice that transgression. Chance opened the fridge and grabbed the ketchup and coke and placed them under his arm and walked in the living room where his dad waited, still watching TV. Chance placed them under items in front of him by a counter near him, dad eyed it for a second, finally saying "Huh... that's very nice of you. I don't uh, think I can eat all of this though champ." Chance shrugged and sat across him, it felt a little weird to do that, but he thought standing over him, leering, wasn't very good eating vibes. "It's fine if you can't eat it all, you can just store it in the fridge or throw it out even. It reheats well though." "Well thank you." Dad reached down and took ahold of it, a normal person couldn't have touched it when it was still probably quite hot, but some old men just had a way with eating while it was hot. Chance narrowed his eyes as the food when in closer to the mouth. He tried to think of all the horrible things his father had let happen, what his life could have looked with him in it, how much of a selfish bastard he was, maybe still was. But it wasn't coming to it, none of it was. It was all stone cold, Godless numbness. He went in for the bite and took it, no shyness taking out a whole half of the cake, looking like he nearly bit his own hand in the process. He chewed it for a very long time, his eyes staring at the TV for a very long time, no Chance in expression for a while. Chance just stared at him, eyes wide, waiting for the verdict. Waiting, waiting...

Then finally his dad gulped and nodded. "Not bad, not bad. You uh, did a good job. I guess I was eh..." he eyed the cake. "Was never a big fan of crab anything... Ha." Chance smiled, and he really meant it. "Me neither." Dad reached his ketchup bottle and opened it, squirting some of it onto the plate, then he dipped the cake into the ketchup and placed the rest of it into his mouth. He didn't look super happy eating it the second time, but he did it without complain anyway. He felt the need to cover- "Sorry if it's not the best." Chance said, not fully meeting his gaze. "I'm not the best cook ever, but I'm working on it." Dad nodded finally finishing the first cake. It was done... "It's fine. Why are you baking anyway? I didn't know you baked." "It's... Just a hobby I got into..." Dad reached for another crab cake and dipped it. "More of a woman's hobby eh?" Dad took a bite, cringing less this time than the last. "I don't really have a lot of hobbies." Then he ate the rest

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of that cake. Chance watched on, eyes dim. Mostly it was a normal crab cake, except for one extra ingredient. Vomit. Chance's vomit. Last night Chance stripped off a lot of his clothes, when into the bathroom with a jar, and started to gag himself with his own fingers. It wasn't as easy as it was made out in movies. Chance had eaten a lot (by his standards) preparing for this, as he didn't want only bail to come out, that didn't seem proper. But at first after a few good tries for maybe fifteen minutes, only a little bail came out. Chance then stood up feeling very sick, and walked into the bathtub, suddenly wanted to lay down and sleep there. He gagged and gagged for probably another fifteen, but nothing came out again, maybe if he felt more passion for this revenge, he would feel more inclined to hurt himself for this. Eventually he gave up, back hunched over feeling just God awful. He started to think about other gross things he could add in that wasn't vomit, then when he tried standing up-

He vomited in the bathtub. He up-chucked for a long, long time, really letting it all out, by the time he was done it was all over his feet and the outside of the jar (but none in it of course, naturally.) after a good moment of catching his breath, realizing he literally had nothing left in his stomach, he bent back down and started to cup the puke with his hands and got it into the jar slowly bit by bit. Afterwards the jar was full but there still was extra vom, so all the while still being very actively sick, he went out of the bathroom, grabbed some paper towels and started cleaning up the nastiness and put it into a plastic bag, after he was done he tied off the bag and thrown it into the bathroom trash, he would have flushed it down the toilet and used toilet paper instead, but he didn't want to clog the toilet. He was also worried about clogging the shows drain as he turned the water on and washed away any extra nastiness. All of that, dad did not know if, and he ate and- at least pretended to tolerate, the food. Out of the five cakes, dad managed to actually eat four of them, which really surprised Chance. Most of all given he seemed not to like it. The last one day there sadly as dad started at it, lip slightly upturned. "You want that?" Chance shook his head. "I'm still not feeling good. Sorry..." Dad shrugged and started up. "Are you going to save it?" He nodded. "Yes. I'll wrap it up..." "Let me do that for you." Chance stood up by dad's side and took the plate from him,

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dad didn't object as Chance ran off into the kitchen and tightly wrapped it up and placed it in a spot in the fridge, weather or not he would eat the last one, he only cared about a little. What matters is that he did eat it. And thankfully that already happened, unlike the horrible mishap with his boss... That could not happen again. There was a fear in what if for whatever reason, dad started to feel really bad from the vomit crab cakes, and freaked out and got labs done on the thing.

Labs, if labs got done on it, then maybe Patrick would be the one doing them. Surely Patrick wouldn't know that, but how... Shameful that would be. Chance shouldn't be giving Patrick work, he should be helping the guy out. He was his assistant, they were basically partners. But still he'd probably find out about all of this at some point if everyone worked out the way Chance wanted. He wondered what that... Scene would look like. What would Patrick think when he found out? He'd probably hate him- yes he had already been over this. There wasn't much to think on, still... Chance's face went dim again as he walked into the living room and sat beside his father-well they were in all fairness a good distance away from each other. All while being on the same couch, so it was sort of like sitting next to each other. Chance said. "Thank you, it really helps me out if other people try my food, gives me an idea on what does and doesn't work." Dad shrugged, eyes fully confused on the TV. "I didn't really say much you know." "...Your expression and just- all of that, gives me a better idea than any words, it's more honest, I guess." Dad shrugged again. "Well besides your new hobby, how's life treating you?" "Alright, I guess." "Work?" "Good good, I haven't been uh, getting a raise I was promised, by the amount of time I've been working there." "Have ya told them?" "Yeah, I told my boss but he... Didn't listen. Every time I try and bring it up, he gets testy." "Eh... You have to get more stern with him kid. You know that's what Zach would do." Chance furrowed his brow. "Zach," he started "Wouldn't have kept this job this long." "Yeah, ha, you're right." Dad laughed, a little half hazy. "Yeah... I'd love to give it to him-my ah, boss I mean, not Zach-but eh, I don't think I have a lot of leverage here. I'm pretty replaceable. My boss told me that before." "Asshole." Grumbled dad. It felt weird to just chat about these sorts of things casually. Normal work issues.

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Other things they talked about was the modern state of TV, some things that were going on in the news when dad changed the channel over to Fox News, and what year they both brought their current cars, subjects only slowly changed, neither feeling a rush to get into any other activity. At one point dad went to the bathroom leaving Chance alone with the TV, watching the news he noticed how little he cared about any political issue. When dad did get back, they talked for a very long time. Hours paced by and soon the clock turned seven. Chance, worrying he might be overstaying his welcome, said he had to go, it wasn't that he wanted to, but he 'had' too. Chance drove home and once he finally got there, he started writing the letter he planned on giving dad at a future date.

When Father read the letter written for him by Chance, he stared blankly into it for a while, not yet knowing what had happened, he sat alone in his dark green house at night, anger and confusion came to him at the end, little did he know it would be replaced with sorrow soon. The letter read:

To Dad:

From Chance. On October 11th, 2025, I gave you crab cake at your house, inside of the crab cake was vomit. From me. The reason I did this is because of what you have done to me. You ruined my childhood, and my life. Even if you didn't mean too, you completely neglected me. And left me with a very evil person, someone you known was evil, but you didn't care or didn't bother trying to stop. You never even said sorry, not that that would have fixed it. It was your knowledge of what was happening and your lack of effort that caused this to happen to you. That's why I did it.

Chapter 7:

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Josh

This one was a tricky case, because it wasn't just Josh he was dealing with-well, Josh was the main course here (though he would probably call himself the main character if you asked him) but the only way he could give him off he made himself, is if he got the others to eat along with, that wouldn't exactly be fair, but in a way it was fitting, since the misdeeds Josh did he always did around them, and they never stopped him. Well, Chance never stopped him either, but his own punishment would come soon enough. Back in the old western days, if you bedded and befriended-and just generally hung around a group of people, and they committed some crime worthy of death, you would get strung up with them in the end if there was strong enough proof for it. So, this was somewhat like that, but Chance had no intention of eating the food with them, besides, at least from what Chance seen, the worst things Jake did were normally to Chance himself! If he could have his way, he would only give it too Josh and leave the others out of it, but he couldn't wrap his mind around how to do that. Josh was never ever around Chance long term without someone else around, in fact, thinking back on it, it almost seemed like Josh was worried Chance was going to beat the over loving shit out of him. Well, Chance was pretty sure Josh would win that easily if it ever came to that, somehow.

Josh was a big fellow, very thick. He had dark black hair and brown eyes, he was one of those sorts of men who often worn clothing that showed off their arms and chests, meaning tight fitting. Chance met him a long time

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ago, in fact when they met Josh didn't really have any other friends, and sure as Hell wasn't a leader to anyone. Back then Josh was thinner, much skinnier, and was actually somewhat nice to Chance. Josh needed him for some schoolwork, when they met Chance was out of high school, but Josh was held back, which was something he resented because he wanted to get into college, everyone in his family did. After Chance helped him out, they started hanging out. Mostly they went out bowling, went places to eat, and talked. They didn't talk about anything all that meaningful, mostly they spoke on TV, celebs, what Josh wanted to do in the future (Chance never spoke on that subject) and of course, girls. Josh was obsessed with girls, Josh often overtly lamented being a virgin, Chance would have rather avoided the subject, but he made it out to Josh that he was also a virgin. Josh wanted to get a girlfriend, but there wasn't really anyone who seemed interested. Well, years passed on, and the two saw each other constantly, but while Chance stayed more or less the same, Josh started to change. He got stronger, passed college, went through a few nice jobs, and even ganged a lot of new 'friends' along the way. Only thing he seemed not to have was a girlfriend, as far as Chance known, he was still a virgin at thirty. If that had changed Josh had never mentioned it, and Chance didn't want to know anything about the subject.

Then there was Wayne, Wayne was a real dick, and he wouldn't mind giving him some 'bad food'. But if it wasn't for Josh, he wouldn't be getting it, to qualify to 'get it' it just takes... Something else. Wayne was ugly, and that wasn't an insult that was just true. He was fat, short, greasy black hair, generally just unpleasant. Chance had no time for people like him. He got the impression Wayne wouldn't leave his house if not for Josh, if he had to guess Josh picked Wayne up from the boiling ally.

There was Finn, the weak small one. He had a soft hand, tiny (stupidly tiny) hands, blonde thick hair, and he was often overdressed. He was sort of kind in a way, but he was almost the worst in his own way. Because he'd act nice and do some kind things, even when it didn't benefit him at all, but then if something bad happened to you, he'd just laugh, if something bad happened he didn't enjoy, he'd just stare, stare! Like a creepy weirdo. If you

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put Chance on trail and asked him about it, Chance would say that Finn was the sort of person would have stand aside and watch someone murder another person, or rape them, right in front of his very eyes.

Then there was Danny, he was younger than everyone else, he was still in high school then, but now he's a little older, 21. He's somewhat sort (still taller than Wayne) short brown hair, baggy appearance overall, a little too overweight, and in all fairness, far from a lady killer. Main thing Chance thought on him was that he was very slow. If you were of a certain age- a boomer, and you had an idea that all the young people nowadays where all stupid, Danny would not help you feel any better on the subject. Out of everyone in their little group, he dislikes Danny the second least, and he didn't really blame him for anything. In fact, if Josh was ever making Chance the butt of the joke, Danny almost never laughed. But that might more so have been because Danny was a sensitive sort of person, easily offended you might say.

Lastly, there was William. William was Danny's older brother, but he was sadly very autistic, he often acted a lot like a bad actor in a low budge show. He was very fat, and sort of gross looking, worse was his thick black glasses, definitely the ugliest looking person in the group (though once you got to see Wayne, your mind would change) Chance felt bad for him, because in a weird sort of way he thought him and William where a little similar, at least when it came to having a curtain level of social issues. Josh totally ignored him; in fact, they all did. Chance was the only one who ever tried to actually say anything to William, but normally he regretted it because either William would ignore him or make some sort of awkward comment. Sometimes Wayne picked on William, and he could get really mad, but otherwise William could somewhat behave in public. Chance had the impression William's mom hated him, because the only reason William was in the group at all was because Danny's mom forced him to take his brother along, but she always let him go out in the most stupid outfits.

What he made for all of them was stew, deer stew. Of course, he didn't hunt for deer himself, he wasn't even in the countryside. He brought it.

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From a specialties meat store. He did have to drive three hours out of town to get it, he didn't have a cooler to keep the meat good going home so he made for of a DIY cooler, with a plastic box he had, he lined it with ice bags on all four sides, and it seemed to work today. While coming home he retrieved the special ingredient. Making the stew was simple, he added the deer meat to a bowel, squished it up better then you normally would, add the special ingredient, then into a pan he laid it, all with some carrots, potatoes, and a little onion. And got it already into the oven.

Once he was finished with that, Chance glanced up at the clock and cringed a little, it was getting late but wasn't quite time to actually go out there, so the food had time to stew. So he probably needed to find something else to do with his time, he looked to the TV and almost started walking to it but shook his head. No, he wasn't as into TV as he used to be, actually he hadn't been into a lot of things as of late. Firstly he grabbed himself a bite to eat, just a bag of veggie chips nothing fancy, he was feeling a little sickish since making that stew, and while it was in the oven it's smell was getting all over the place, it didn't smell great... Chance went over to his PC and hooked up his phone to the PC and extracted a few photos from the phone and started posting them to the his social medias, since started everything he had neglected that part some, but he couldn't get weak on that end, not yet anyway. He saw that Tracy had been liking some of his photos. After posting some of his cooking pictures, he stood up, rolled his chips and placed them back where they belonged. He looked at the clock again, still not time. Just then he remembered he needed to get his mail down at the lobby, his check should be in there (if the boss remembered it.) Chance put on his boots (as he had no other clothes laying around) and walked out of the apartment. He might have been little underdressed, short shorts and an overly baggy black shirt, and he was getting a bit more of a beard then was needed. But no matter. He walked out of his apartment, down the hall and the stairs, then into the lobby to get his mail. It went fine; everything seemed a little more quiet then normal, almost peaceful. If you went here for the first time you really might get the wrong impression, and that would be a real unpleasant surprise for you in the next day. After holding a fresh beautiful useless piece of mail (no check,

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of course, maybe he should give the boss's wife another piss bottle)

Then he started back up the stairs. But when he reached the hall, something caught his eyes. It was that kid who lived with Claudia, he was standing in the hall picking at something on his boots. Chance cringed a little freezing in his place, which was apparently a mistake since when the kid saw him, he snarled at him and quickly got into a more upright pose. As for Chance his own pose actually relaxed, but his face turned into a frown. Chance looked away and started walking forward, but when Chance got close to his door, the kid said, "What are you looking at?!" Chance tried ignoring him, trying to open his own door but- oh, it seemed he didn't actually lock his own door... How could he do that again!? "Hey, listen here freak!" The kid yelled again, poking Chance in the back. Chance's eyes caught something, Chance turned and- "Oh shit." Chance mumbled, the creepy neighbor beside Chance's apartment was now poking his head out from his doorway, starring at him. "What!? Scared? Freak." Chance looked at the kid, and for a moment the kid seemed surprised but then said "Yeah, everyone knows you're a pussy. You don't even do anything when people call you out on your-" "Drako!" The two of them looked behind the kid into his apartment, there stood Claudia, looking like she just rolled out of bed, and a very annoyed look on her face. Hands on her hips. The kid looked very small all of the sudden, stepping away from Chance but not daring to get too close to Claudia. "Drako, get your ass in bed, now." Drako didn't fight, he quickly dashed past Claudia but even in that time she managed to hit the kid on the butt- and not in a friendly way. She looked back Chance, a lot more friendly but still with an air for being put out. "I'm sorry about him. Was he harassing you?" Chance shrugged, he tried to look like he wasn't very bothered or anything, but it must not have worked very well. "I'm sorry I-" She looked down the hallway, and suddenly that weirdo across the hall ducked into his own room. "Would you like to step in for a second?" "Oh, uh, sure?" Claudia gave him a little smile and lead him into the apartment, shutting the door behind them. The kid seemed to be gone, presumably to his own room. Claudia sat Chance down on the kitchen table and they both sat across each other. When she sat down, she suddenly looked a lot more exhausted than she already appeared. "Has he been

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harassing you lately?" Claudia said in a whisper. "Well, uh..." "I really want to know." "... Sometimes? It's not a big deal-" "Does he ever do it with some other boys?" "... One time. It's fine though, he's just a kid-" Claudia signed loudly and rubbed her eyes. "I was worried about that. Those boys, the ones he's been hanging round with, they're no good. They start picking on people, then they get worse and worse about it, until they start making you give money to them..." Chanced cringed a little, and she noticed that and quickly said. "Oh, he's going to stop that, I'm going to have a talking too with him, if he does that again, he'll regret it." Then she reached out her hand, and patted Chance's own hand a few times as it laid on the table, the contact sort of made him feel weird. "I'm sorry about that. He's not a bad kid, he's just gotten in with some really bad people." Chance nodded and started looking around the room a little, too avoid eye contact with her. "It's fine... Your apartment is very organized..." she looked around her own living space, then simply said "Thanks?" Chance cringed a little moving back in his chair. "Sorry... Speaking without thinking." "No, thank you." She looked at his clothes briefly then said "What do you do for work anyway? You wear scrubs, are you a nurse?" Chance shook his head "I'm an assistant at a lab." "Like a scientist?" "Well, I'm not a scientist, i just happened to get the job. It's easy I just log test results. Anyone could do it." Claudia nodded. "Well, I think that's a very cool job. Better than mine." She leaned back in her chair, suddenly looking a lot like a model. "Walgreens..." Chance shrugged. "Work is work. I eh- guess Drako keeps you busy?" She nods a little too esthetically. "Yes, he's always getting into some trouble. And you know-" She leans in closer to the table, which made Chance suddenly get into a better mood because (frankly) her breasts squished into the table. "It's a shame, because he's not a dumb kid. He's a quick thinker when he wants to be. He's really into nature, he's always looking up stuff around national park rangers." She smiled looking at Drako's bedroom door, to Chance the idea of the kid being a park ranger made him cringe a little. She shrugged then said "I don't have the money to send him too- wherever that would require schooling anyway, besides he'd need to move out of state. But he could do something else! Not sure what, but if he doesn't pass this next exam, he's not going to ever do better than me..." Chance nodded slowly, leaning back into his chair, then he said. "Well, it'll

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work out. Eventually everything gets better, at some point.” She smiled at him and he smiled back, though he didn’t really mean it.

After a while, Chance had to leave. He found that apparently he left that stew in the oven too long. His apartment smelled bad, he wondered if Claudia could tell it on him? No matter. He pulled on a proper pair of pants, and a jacket, and went out of the whole apartment block in a hurry. Maybe chatting with her was a bad idea. But it was nice to actually talk to someone friendly- or more spastically someone who hasn’t screwed him over at some point. But that wasn’t a good enough reason, he couldn’t let anything get in the way, even if it was Patrick. Chance dashed into his car, leaving the hot stew in the passenger seat, he was glad to sit it down, it was burning his hand and arm. He started the car and drove off into the dark night.

It was a pretty night, not very foggy. It gave Chance the time to think a few things over, for these next few months, how could he save money? He could cut back on foods (outside of cooking of course) he could sell a few things he didn’t need anymore. He thought about not even turning on the lights anymore, but he didn’t want to be that uncomfortable. Either way, he was thinking money, he had a good bit stored away (at least for this economy) but there was always room for improvement. Soon Josh’s apartment block was in sight. The whole gang was going to be there, Josh’s roommate wasn’t going to be there tonight, so they were all going to hang out. Wayne called him yesterday about it seeming weirdly pleased to do so, made worse by the last time Chance saw him, Wayne was forcing him to kick dead pigs. “We’re going to be going to Josh’s place, so be there.” Wayne said, with such glee. They must have been planning a prank. Maybe they were all in on it? It’s happened before. Well, this time Chance had a little prank of his own. Chance parked his car, the lot was surprisingly full, so it took longer than needed. He walked through the lot, holding the stew very carefully, before walking into the building he gave it a little sniff, it wasn’t smelling as bad now that it cooled down, it didn’t smell funny though. Chance had to tell the person at the front desk who he was and where he was going, and the person confirmed it with Josh himself over the

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phone. Then Chance went up, not taking the elevator instead electing for the stairs. It was a long walk, since Josh was so high up. But eventually he got there and knocked on the door. He seemed to wait there a long time, longer than he should have. But right as he was getting his hand out to knock again. The door was opened. It was Danny, looking a little wobbly. "Hey... You're late." Chance walked in and immediately looked at the clock in the kitchen; he wasn't late. Danny walked up behind Chance and stared at the wrapped meal.

"What is that?" Danny asked, his voice a lot like a child's at the moment. "Stew." Chance said, Danny shrugged and stumbled into the living room.

On the couch now was everyone but William, who sat in a totally different corner of the room watching them.

Finn looked over the couch and nodded at Chance, then Josh also looked over at him and smiled. "Hey, get over here, you're late." Chance re-looked at the clock, no he wasn't late. Being last doesn't make you late!

Chance cringed a little, then walked over to the couch, he actually had to guess if there was room, then saw that if he squeezed there would be room between Josh and Wayne 'great'. He sat down, Wayne moved over but Josh didn't bother, he looked over Chance and smiled in a very unpleasant manner. "Like being next to me?" Wayne across the couch rolled his eyes. "Yeah, I could see that, he likes sticking around you." Finn across the couch cringed, and Danny looked too spaced out to say much. Of course, William had no reaction, he was just staring off into the TV, his expression was less socially unaware and more so... Down Syndrome. On the TV was boxing, it was a pretty big game today, Chance watched that himself even on his own, but he has been losing a lot of interest, took him a second to remember one of the top fighters. "Guess what?" Josh said, looking at the TV, Wayne and Finn were watching closely at Chance's expression while Danny and William were actually paying attention to the TV, Chance didn't

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think Josh was really watching at all... "What?" "I learned a new trick." "..."
"Want to know what it is?" Chance didn't, but he known what he was
supposed to be saying. "What?" "I learned how to eat fire, for real not a
magic trick." Chance frowned and started messing with his fingers.
"Okay?..." "It's a party trick, I have a recording of it, want to see it?" As you
can imagine, he did not want to see it. Nevertheless Josh handed Chance
his cell phone, and on it was a recording of Josh doing the very thing he
was talking about, it was sort of weird, like making a malitiz coattail with fire
coming out of the top, but sucking it in. Given the slight cringing expression,
he figured it hurt some, but he saw where this was going from here. Josh
known how to do it right, Chance didn't, Josh was going to 'ask' or 'dare'
Chance to do it, he was going to get hurt and they'd all laugh. "That's
alright, I guess..." Josh looked at him, brows raised, so quickly Chance
went on.

"Instead of eating fire, I have something else better we can all eat- well, not
me. My stomach hurts." Josh fully turned to him. "Yeah?" Chance didn't say
anything, only jerking his head over to where in the kitchen he left the stew.
Josh stood up and walked over to it; Wayne watched closely from the
couch but didn't follow. Josh leered over it, a slightly disturbed look over his
face. "What is that?" Now everyone looked too Josh, even William. "It's
stew. Deer stew." Was all Chance said. "Deer? Where did YOU get deer
meet?" Wayne laughed. "A store." "Aw, I like deer. There are beautiful
animals." Finn said, Josh rolled his eyes. "Why?" "I've been cooking lately."
"So!?" "Well... It's not a lot, just cooking for yourself." "Well, you should
have asked before bring it here." Josh said, hands on his hips, Wayne
laughed. Chance just cringed a little 'this is not going the way it should...' he
thought. "It doesn't even look good." Chance tried to shift his face into a
genuinely sad look. "I'm...Sorry. I'm trying to become a better cook." "Oh,
that's great!" Josh laughed, waving his hand at him in a feminine pose.
"Who's the lucky man?" Everyone laughed, even the sensitive Finn, and the
very drunk Danny. William laughed too but a little half hazardly, like he
didn't know why. And of course, Wayne laughed the loudest. Chance just
let them all rip, and waited for them to finish, then he finally said, "The lucky
man, is you." Everyone suddenly went fully quiet, even William. Josh went

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from being surprised, to a flash of anger, to being very put out looking. After a very long moment Danny gave out a very brief chuckle until Finn pointed him in the side. "... Whatever." Josh mumbled then started back to the couch, sitting down hard almost landing in Chance's lap. "I'll ah, try some." Danny said, and as soon as he did Finn joined in. "I will too, let's see what the trad wife cooked up." Finn said that in a friendly way, but for whatever reason it really poked Chance.

Finn stood up and as he did he grabbed Danny by the arm, helping him up as they walked over to the kitchen. After they had already gotten over there, Chance stood up as well and walked into the kitchen, standing by their sides. Finn unwrapped the meal and eyed it for a second, Danny standing by eyes half open. "It's... Cold." Finn mumbled, all Chance could say was "Sorry." Finn got out a plate and a spoon and started scooping it onto his plate, after he got his he got a plate out for Danny and started making it for him, after he pulled out a fork for Danny immediately ran off to the couch with his food without even a thank you too Chance or Finn. Finn looked it over a moment, Chance watched him closely but didn't want to seem too overbearing, he wasn't watching closely because he was enjoying some sort of revenge, it was because he was worried it might taste too bad, he wished Josh had eaten it first! Finn took in his fork and pulled up a bite, eyeing it for one more moment, then eating it. He chewed it for a long time, one moment visibly cringing a little which made Chance's heart skip a beat. Finn swallowed, then immediately went in for a second bite, eating this one a little faster, then he looked over to Chance and said, "You wouldn't be offended if I added more salt, would you?" Chance quickly shook his head no. "Not at all!" Finn did just that as he reached over to a cabinet and started adding the salt. "Yo, Chan this food smells like shit!" Wayne called over, looking he could see Danny was eating while Wayne leered over it, Danny didn't seem all that displeased with it. "It's not that bad..." Finn said. Chance made himself frown, Finn noticed it and quickly added "No, it's cool you made it and all. I guess I don't like deer much..." Suddenly William ran into the kitchen and stopped right in front of the food, Finn eagerly put down his own plate and made William a plate of his own, as he did Finn asked, "Are you going to get one of your own?"

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"I...Made sone recently. Besides I'm feeling sick, I've been sick a lot recently." "Yeah?" "Yeah, I can't even drink beer tonight." "He's trying to poison us!" Wayne called out, making an ugly snort at the end. "It's not bad." Danny said gingerly, taking another juicy bite, making Chance cringe. After William gotten his plate, he immediately dug in. "Ah shit, there goes another one!" Wayne cried out. "It's good." William said timidly too Chance, but Wayne overheard it and said, "Of course the retard things that." Josh laughed hard but Danny turned to him, frowning "He's not retarded, asshole." Wayne looked like he was going to punk the kid's nose in, but Josh laughed and said, "I think retardation is genetic Danny!" Josh and Wayne both laughed hard, Finn didn't seem (or pretended) not to notice, finishing his plate, and putting his dish into the sink, leaving Danny just sitting there blushing. William cared not about the insult either which way. Chance walked into the living room and sat down where Finn had. "Really it does smell awful, was that meat bad?" "... No, try it for yourself." "No way man, I'm not even hungry." Finn sat down where Chance was before. "Stop complaining and just eat it." Finn said, making Wayne roll his eyes. Yet he still actually sat up from the couch and walking to the kitchen, he did make sure to hit Chance on the head before leaving. Chance side eyed from the couch. Watching him get it ready the whole time. He wouldn't lie, he enjoyed watching him eat it. The little shit had it coming. The sight of a stray line of double meaty grease going down his chin was almost beautiful in a way. Now everyone had eaten, except of course for...

Chance didn't want to bring it up at first, he wanted it too set in, everyone get done eating, maybe then Josh would. He was curtain if he left the food there Josh would eat it later. But that would not do! Chance had to see this, it was fine for him not seeing the Boss, even Tracy if it came to it, but not Josh.

The boxing went on. It seemed the food was only getting colder and colder, Josh wasn't yapping as much as he normally would, maybe his pride was a little wounded. Finally after everyone was sitting down again like they were before, Danny actually went in for the stew a second time, finally Josh did

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speaking again. "... About that fire though." He started looking slyly at Chance, eyebrow raised. "I want you too try it, see how you do and all. We can all watch you do it, after the game goes off." Chance didn't say anything, just stared at the TV. "Hey?" Josh asked, no reply. "Hey!?" "No." Everyone looked to Chance, Josh's mouth was particularly hung open, then he crossed his arms. "Don't be a pussy, if I can you can too." Chance looked to him, but didn't say much, Josh leaned in a little bit. "Come on, do it." "...I'll do it, if you try my stew." Josh rolled his eyes, face getting a little red. "No, your stew looks like shit. Maybe you should try a different hobby." Chance frowned but said nothing. Josh leaned in even closer. "Do it Chance." "...No..." "I'm not asking." Everyone in the room got even more stiff and quite than they are already. "I'm not doing it." Chance felt weird, despite what he was saying and acting right now, he felt like a giant pussy, very boyish- or worse, womanly. "You're going to fucking do it." Josh put his hand on Chance's shoulder, hard. "...Why are you scared eating a stew?" Josh was quiet for a moment; he actually blushed a little. "Why do you want me to eat it so badly? What did you spit in it?" "I wouldn't spit in your food." Chance said, more serious than he needed to say, and he really did mean it. "Ah- Whatever, I'll eat your stupid fucking food." Josh stood up, but just when Chance thought he was getting what he wanted, Josh pushed him forward so far, he slammed into Wayne hard. When he did Wayne pushed him forward the other direction almost as hard as Josh. "Get off me weirdo!" Chance was now going to bruise in the front and the back.

It didn't matter, Josh was going in the kitchen to get some, Chance didn't dare turn to look at him until he knew Josh was close to eating it, when he was getting close Chance stood up from the couch, getting a sharp pain in his chest, still he moved in closer to the kitchen, there stood Josh holding a plate he was currently filling with stew, for someone who acted so badly about getting it, he sure was putting a lot of it on his plate. Chance kept a good distance from Josh as he did it. Josh's plate was very squishy and wet, it seemed he was getting to the more bottom part of the bowl. He tried to get a part with his fork, but found that it was too wet for that, so he thrown the fork into the sink and reached into a cabinet to get a spoon. He scooped up a large portion of stew and without looking at it, took a giant

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bite in his mouth, chewed it for maybe a second, then swallowed. Suddenly a large wave of informal washed over Chance, it was... Weird. It wasn't like joy in seeing someone get what they have coming to them, or the fun of a prank, it was actually pleasure. Just for this moment, Chance won. Josh went in for another bite, and Chance smiled even wider. What Josh didn't know, while there was deer meat inside of it, along with those veggies and other things, there was also an extra ingredient. Pig meat. Rotten pig meat, very old and rotten. He had of course gotten it from the place that Josh and Wayne took him a while ago, in the junkyard. He had gotten it right after he went to the store to get the deer meat, when he was coming back. He had to jump the fence again, and doing that alone was not easy, and even though he really did not like being around them, without Josh and Wayne he felt very isolated. He was worried the pigs weren't going to be there, but they were, and they looked even worse than they did before, only part that was clearly still pig was the hooves, but they were there, which was what mattered, he had a clear small plastic bag waiting for their guts. What he had planned for Josh a while ago was something different, dog shit actually, Chance of course didn't have a dog but he knows where to get that, the dog park (there was always someone leaving their dog's crap behind) but after Josh's little incident, Chance changed his mind and decided he'd let Josh make his own meal...

On the third bite Josh slammed his plate down so loudly Chance jumped back a little, his smile leaving, then Josh stormed over to him. Josh grabbed him by the arm and got in his face. "Happy now?" Chance didn't say anything, which only made Josh more red. "Well, I hope you are. Because you fucking ruined tonight, you're such a selfish dick. You-You-" Josh waved around and pushed Chance closer into the wall. "You think everything is about you, you come in here with your stupid shitty stew. We were having a good time without you; you think this meeting is about you? No one wants you around Chance! You're a fucking weirdo; you wouldn't go out anywhere if it wasn't for me!" Josh shook him by the arm and really slammed him against the wall, Chance couldn't help it, he had to turn his head away from him.

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“You think your better than me? Because you used to be smarter in high school!? Well, you’re not smart, and nobody likes you, no body! Not even your own family fucking likes you!” Josh started to spotty his words a little until his face grown a little dimmer and almost a smile came over, and he said. “Well, Larry liked you.”

Chance snapped his head over to Josh, and it was like a spell was broken. Josh’s expression chances from...Something, too surprise, the surprise of an old man’s, like he didn’t know where he was. Chance stared at him blanky, mouth slightly agape. Before he could take the abuse, because it wasn’t the first time that had happened, and also because of what he had just done to Josh...

How did Josh even remember who Larry was? He told him about him a long time ago. No one else around had any idea what had happened and looks passed between them. Chance rubbed his shoulders and kept his eyes on Josh as he moved away from him. Josh sat down on the couch and turned away from him. Slowly everyone got back to talking but everyone ignored Chance like the plague. He tried watching TV for a while, but the joy of him eating that was sort of lost on him now. He left soon after that. He had things to do, he had to write the letter for Josh, he stood over it a long time trying to find the words, he wanted to list every time Josh did something nasty to him, but he decided to keep it sweet.

When Josh read the letter, he read it at home, he had no idea what was going on, he was reading it while leaning against the counter top, the farther he got the more red in the face he got, for a moment he wondered if it was some sort of prank Wayne did, after rereading the address he grabbed his cell phone and dialed up Chance, but Chance didn’t answer...

To Josh:
From Chance:

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On October 12th 2025, I went to your apartment and gave you along with Wayne, Finn, William and Finn, stew. That stew had rotten pig's meat in it. It was from the same pigs that you had me burst open, by the time I got to that meat it was very watered down and somewhat mixed in with the ground.

I'm tired of the way you changed, you way you started treating me so poorly, the things you say to me and expect me not to say anything about. You're a cruel person, and your ego pushes away anyone who isn't an inherently weak or also a cruel person. I hate the people you keep around yourself, there all assholes, but none of them as such of a asshole as you. I won't put up with any of this anymore, that's why I poisoned your food. That's why I did it.

Chapter 8:
Zach

Cooking with Chance

By Norman Bargo (November 2025)

Chance needed a break. Josh hadn't gone well. At first it felt so good, then it went horribly wrong, he could have taken the unpleasant abuse, that wasn't the first time Josh went ape shit on him. It was the last part that made everything horrible, he couldn't enjoy it, it wasn't really for his enjoyment, this whole thing, but that wasn't exactly a small thing either. Dark thoughts about showing up to Josh's apartment, guns ablazing, maybe running him over, lots of other things... Of course he didn't do any of them, because he was a pussy. So, he took a two weeklong break, but after locking his wounds, he had to get into bigger fish.

Zach was a lot like Josh, maybe even in some way less horrible. He was, however, a lot more violent and less friendly, but that was part of the reason he was less horrible, he didn't pretend to be your friend, he didn't manipulate you, he'd look you right in the eye as he stabbed you in the gut. Zach was Chance's older brother, technically his half-brother, but unlike Tracy they grown up together, at least for a while, so the other not generically related part felt less important. They both saw the worst of mom, and both at the same time went through hardships like moving, scary boyfriends mom would bring in, bullies lack of food and power, even having to live out of a RV in the desert for a month with no air conditioning, but instead of being them together, it only did the opposite. Zach would go out of his way to make Mom's boyfriends dislike Chance, so they'd favor Zach more. Zach would beat up Chance at any new school they went too, maybe just as an easy way of showing everyone Zach was an alpha without any real social consequences. There was even times Zach would literally steal food from Chance's plate when meals where scares. They'd fight for food like animals. Unlike now, Chance would try and fight back, but it never

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ended well. By the time Zach reached high school, it was pointless. After a point Zach was sent off to a Juvenal correctional facility, then by the time he got out of there he was an adult and living on his own, so Chance saw little of him for a while.

Zach wasn't genetically related to Chance's father, yet for some unknowable reason after Tracy started 'helping out' Zach, dad started hanging around him too. That was what got them seeing each other again. But Chance hadn't forgotten everything that had happened before. Zach had changed in the sense he was less constitutionally abusive, now he only shown here every now and then. Chance went out of his way to avoid seeing any of it, but now that he was doing this...

Well, he needed to go into the belly of the beast. That was going to be the hardest part, getting Zach to actually eat anything he gave him. He known Zach loved sweets, something he got very little of growing up, so naturally Chance's best 'chance' of getting Zach to eat anything was making it very very sweet. First, he was thinking of something that was literally candy, but that wouldn't work for his... Plans, for it. He was thinking pie, then then settled on Cheesecake. That seemed a good pick, a lot of men Chance known had a thing for cheesecake, maybe there was something masculine about the dessert that he couldn't pick up on, but either way that was the best bet for getting Zach to eat anything. He couldn't decide on if he should call ahead of time or not, but he thought showing up there might make the likely hood Zach would eat lower and lower. So, one morning, before work, Chance did just that, rung him up. He had tried the night before, he didn't actually know Zach's number before, he had unfortunately had to DM Tracy asking her what his number was, she told him: "You must not have talked to him in a while! Well, don't be surprised if he doesn't call back right away." And she was right, Chance called quite a few times that night, but he never got back to him. He would have tired longer, but he didn't want to come off too needy, so he waited for the morn. And here he was. He called once, waiting them tapping his fingers on the countertop, eyeing the front door like it was suddenly going to fling open for some reason... He almost actually pulled the phone away from himself when suddenly the ringing

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stopped. "Hello?" It was Zach, he said it with a lot of confusion Chance wasn't used to in him, he definitely didn't know his number either. "Hello, it's me..." "Who!?" Zach asked loudly. "Chance. Chance Sailors..." "You didn't need to say your last name, it's mine too, idiot." Chance gulped, it was over. "Okay..." "So, what do you want?!" "I..."

Chance signed, this wasn't going to be easy at all. "I've been baking a lot, it's sort of... My new hobby." "Okay?" "And I have been asking people to try out my food lately..." "Okay?" "Yeah... I've gotten Tracy, and dad to try some of my stuff... They liked it..." "Just spit it out!" "Want to try some?" "No! Why the Hell would I do that?" Chance's mouth went dry, he really didn't know what to tell him, why couldn't he just take a free meal? "...It would... Mean a lot to me..." Chance gagged. "I don't care, Ha!" Chance could kill him. "It's cheese cake." "You're weirding me out, keep it for yourself. How did you even get my number?" "T-Tracy gave it to me." He could hear Zach sign on the other end. "That bitch." Chance wanted to protest at that, Zach really was an ungrateful shit, but of course he didn't. "Lose that number, I don't want your food." Then suddenly, the line went dead. So, that hadn't went well. He known calling again would only make things worse, so he just pushed on again. Chance went to work as usual, and when he got home, that night he would get started on that cheese cake, weather Zach wanted it or not. When he got home though, he became very derailed. He didn't go home straight away, he had to go out and get the special ingredient, it was hidden inside of a little plastic baggy though he wasn't actively trying to hide it, it could sort of be mage out through the foggy plastic, so he wrapped it up in circles and held it close to his person. When he walked into the apartment block he normally kept his head low, so he wasn't making eye contact with a lot of people, so by the time he noticed he was already pretty close, but there was Claudia, by the front desk talking to a worked. He only meant to look a moment but then she slightly turned around, and she noticed him too. She blinked twice, then gave him a little sly smile. She talked to the person at the front for a little bit, Chance could have ran off upstairs but felt an urge not too.

Claudia then got finished and hoped over to Chance, looking tired strangely

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joyful. "Hey Chance, we keep bumping into each other." Chance nodded, and smiled back. "Yeah, I know. I guess..." He quickly slide his little baggy into his pocket. "I've been getting out a lot more lately." "That's nice." Her voice went almost still for a moment. "Who wants to be here all the time?" Chance smiled a little wider and nodded. "Yeah, how's Drako?" "Why did I ask that?" Chance cringed as he spoke. "He's okay, I'm still worried about that test coming up." She shrugged. "Did you go to college?" "No. I don't think I'm smart enough for that. Did you?" She waved a hand at him. "Don't put yourself down. It's very unattractive. And uh, well I did, but I had to pull out, Drako just showed up then." Chance frowned and she added speedily "It's alright! It was just beauty school anyway, not like I was working at being a heart surgeon or anything." "I'm sorry..." "Don't worry about it, really." Then the two of them went silent for a moment, soon after they turned, behind Chance the old Jewish woman walked out of her apartment, looking strangely timid, looked back and forth. Then ducked back into her room. When Chance looked back, he could see Claudia frowning. She spoke quietly. "Poor lady... I don't know why she lives here." Then she added quickly. "Oh- I ah, don't mean it like that. She's just so... Small. She barely leaves you know, and she's so white-" she giggled a little. "Well, you're white too. But you know what I mean, right?" Chance nodded, he did, that old woman for in very poorly with everything else. "I guess sometimes people find themselves in weird places." Claudia nodded. "You're right about that..." then Claudia turned her head, and Chance followed, heart taking a little jump when he saw who it was. It was Tracy, she was looking preppy as usual, wearing a cartoonishly large coat. "Is she trying to get robbed? Who's that?" Claudia asked, sounding a little touchy.

'Has she never seen Tracy before?' Thought Chance. "That's... My sister." "Oh-" she looked away, blushing a little. "Sorry." "Don't worry, she's my half sister." Chance really wasn't offended, he was just surprised, he had no idea black people could even blush, he never thought about it. "Hey?" Tracy said as she got up to them, eyebrow raised a light smile on her face, she stood close to Chance. "How are you doing?" She asked Chance, he only cringed at her. There was a little pause, Claudia was very blank faced. "Uh, hello! I'm Tracy." She reached out her hand to Claudia, after a moment

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Claudia smiled and shook her hand. "Hey, evening. I'm Claudia." "Claudia? Interesting name. I like it." Claudia didn't seem to mind but Chance leered away from Tracy. "I'm Chance's sister by the way!" "I know, he told me." Chance cringed into his skin, moving away even more. "Oh really? That's nice! Do you know my brother well?" "Yeah..." Claudia glanced over at Chance, he couldn't really imply anything with his eyes that wasn't a talent he had, so poor Claudia was left out on her own, if Chance could have told her anything, he'd tell her he didn't care at all how she described himself and her to others. They were neighbors. Tracy just nodded and looked over to Chance and also got nothing out of it. "I was going over to his apartment." "Yeah?" "Yeah, I got over there sometimes, he needs some help sometimes. But all men do." Claudia smiled. "Yeah, that's right. My brother needs a lot of that too. Never cleans anything on his own." "Oh eh-" Tracy glanced over to Chance again, her smile more sly now. "He cleans on his own and all, the apartment could just use a woman's touch sometimes." All Claudia could really respond to that with was a smile. Then Tracy started to walk off, waving once last time to Claudia "It was nice meeting you!" Then she was off. Chance and Claudia watched her leave for a moment then looked back at each other. "I guess you have to go now." She said, Chance signed. "Sorry if she was... A little much." "It's fine." Claudia shrugged. "I don't even ask her to come around, she just does..." "Huh, well that's sweet of her. I know when-or if-Drako ever moves out then I would check up on him all the time." Chance wrinkled up a little, more then he meant too, frowning very intensely. "She's not a lot like you..." Claudia raised a eyebrow but said very little, she cringed away a little. "She seems alright... Well, I have places to be too." Chance nodded and moved away even farther, feeling like any moment she was going to literally spit on him. "Yeah, see you around." She nodded and waved. "Bye." "Bye." Chance turned away and practically ran up the stairs out of her large gaze. Once he known he was out of her sight he started to think- 'How can I get Tracy to get out of here?' he came off to 'alright' around Claudia to pretend he was sick and not feeling up to visitors, so he would need to do something else...

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Chance got to the hallway, and there by his door was Tracy, 'oh good, the door was actually locked.' Chance thought. He walked up and unlocked his front door; all the while Tracy just smiled at him. He opened the front door, and they both walked in. Tracy quickly sat down on the front couch, taking off her shoes and jacket at the front door, Chance walked into his bedroom and briefly shut the front door so he could hide away the bag he had hidden into a drawer. There was something else in his room he couldn't let Tracy see (or smell) so he shut his bedroom door behind him. "Hey." Tracy said, moving to the end of the couch so Chance could sit down. He didn't instead hovering a good distance away from her. "Are you with that woman?" Chance pursed his lips. "No." "Aww, that's sad. She seemed nice." "I don't think she liked you." Chance said coldly, Tracy looked at him a little longer then was needed, then opiated to role her eyes. "She doesn't need to like me. But it wouldn't be so bad if she liked you~" Chance walked over to the front door and started pulling off his jacket. "She's, my neighbor. That's all." "Okay, that's fine. I mean, I didn't really take you for the type to race mix anyway." Chance glanced over at her; he never really saw her as the type to say something like that. "I don't care about that sort of thing." "Mhh, fair enough. Well-" Tracy signed a little then looked back up to Chance with a little hesitation. "How did that... Go, with Zach?" Chance froze for a moment (only a moment) then lowered his head some, hands on his hips. This was a bit of an odd one. It wasn't that he couldn't answer this question, it's that he didn't really want too, but there wasn't exactly an easy way out of this one. Awkward. "He didn't want anything I had to offer." "Aww..." Tracy whined, her head chocked. "Sorry about that." Chance shrugged and just stood around, a little too straight. "It's probably for the best. I love him of course you know, but he's..." "I know." It took him a while to actually get Tracy out of his room; he actually felt the need to walk her too her own car. They only chatted for a while, but then they she left, Chance couldn't even tell why exactly she showed up, it seemed she was doing her normal checkup, and when she saw Claudia she got distracted, only now chatting with Chance, she kept trying to find a way to edge him into talking about Claudia, but he wouldn't even really move a inch on that.

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Once she left, he got started on the Cheesecake, a little later than he wanted. First, he got out what he needed for the crust, a pan, graham cracker, melted butter, and sugar. He wanted it too be very sweet. He got out a bowl and mixed the ingredients together, he didn't strr too long. Then he carefully pressed the mix once it was done into the pan and let it bake, it was supposed to not stay in to long, but he left it in for fifteen minutes, he wanted it brown. Then while that was happening, he got started on the best part. He got cream cheese, sugar and mixed it together (he had no beater) then once he felt okay with that he added in the eggs and vanilla, and of course the... Special part...

It was late, late in the day anyway. It was a Saturday, so he drove out early. Cheesecake in his own home-made freezer, he had a feeling he didn't need to make sure it looked appealing. The whole drive over his palms held onto the wheel slightly, shoulders shaky, eyes dry. When he saw Zach's house in the distance, he tried to convince himself it wasn't his own, Chance had never actually been there before after all, so how would he know? But of course, it was his house. Chance parked his car in the nearby lot, grabbed the plate with the goods on it with wet hands, and got out of the car and started off to the house. It was a very tiny place. Across the road there was a Long John slivers, and admittedly it was looking pretty good right now. Chance knocked on the front door dangerously slightly. Unlike dad, a reply came back quickly, but the voice ranged out from a distance and the door looked like it was a way away from getting open. "What!?" It wasn't a threatening called, but it chased him to pause. "It's Chance." "What?..." From inside of the apartment there could be heard rustling and then stomping, and the door thrown open. There too Zach, he did stop seem very friendly. He wasn't looking too bad in comparison to the men mom used to bring around. He had tanned skin, dark brown hair, many muscles, and strangely big feet (like Chance) he wasn't as tall as Chance, but he was very close to the norm height wise. Zach looked down to the plate and immediately his face redded. "What the Hell man?" Chance just stared, slightly frowning. There was a pause, and eventually Zach stepped back and slammed the door to shut it, but Chance reached out his

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foot to block it, the verb so strong he almost dropped his plate. "Just let me in. I made this for you." "Can't you take a hint?" It was this time or never after all,

so he quickly pulled the door out more with his foot and stepped inside. Zach looked almost dumb founded, and that was Chance's cue that he needed to find an appropriate place to sit down this food before Zach got a little too touchy with him. He walked forward to what seemed to be a halfway kitchen and living room table, and sat it down, fearing a blow to the head anytime soon. It didn't come as he turned around, Zach was standing right where he was before, only now he seemed perhaps assumed? Hands on his hips. Just then Chance noticed the very faint smell of beer in the air, he hadn't known Zach to be much of a drinker (like he heard dad was) but hey, it was a Saturday, Chance didn't want to judge, and he known Zach had a pretty hard job. Memories of the time Zach broke Chance's arm when Chance was only seven, so he known he was going to have to be smart about this, he didn't want a fight, but if he did, could he even force anything down him? Zach gave a little laugh. "You're joking right? You called me now, you're running into my house to give me..." "Cheesecake." "...Why?" "Well, I've been giving everyone I know something, to ask for their opinions." "We don't know each other, ha ha!" "...We grown up together?" "Whatever." Zach stepped a little closer. "I don't want your shitty food. Go give it too Tracy, or your bastard dad." Chance just stared. "You're not getting like her, are you? She's not even my sister, she's your sister, and I've had enough of her already." "She's my half-sister..." "Oh my God you nerd, whatever. You're my half sibling too idiot, so kindly please, fuck off, get out of my house." Zach pointed to the front door, a tired look on his face. 'Time for the nuclear opinion' thought Chance. There wasn't much of a choice here,

"Listen, I already made this. Eat it." Zach stepped a little closer. "No. Get out." "I'm not leaving until you eat it." "Are you trying to poison me?" Zach laughed with little humor. "No- You don't have to eat the whole thing, just try it." "Why?!" "Because everyone else did it, and I want you to do it too." "Are you crazy!?" Zach now got right into Chance's face, breath flouting all over Chance, their eyes meeting perfectly as Zach stood on his tip toes (no

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shame even!) “Get out of my house, now!” “Your over-” Suddenly Zach reached behind Chance, going to grab the plate surely, knowing Zach he was either going to smash the whole thing against the wall, or onto Chance’s head. Quickly, Chance bent to his side like a dancer and grabbed the plate, holding it above both of their heads, Zach reached for it but Chance kept it out of his hands. “Get out of my house weirdo!” “Just eat the food!” Zach thrown his fist into Chance, making him cringe almost stumbling back, he would have fallen over if it wasn’t for the counter, it would leave two nasty burses on his back later. It took Chance a moment to breath in, that punch really blown him out, he known he was doing the wrong thing here, but there wasn’t any other way he’d get in a social situation Zach would eat anything around him for a very long time, maybe a year or two at the least, and Chance didn’t have the sort of time left for this project, and regardless, that shit has it coming. While gaining his breath, he started unwrapping the plastic over the whole plate, he didn’t care about “Your eating it weather you like it or not!-”

Zach punched Chance below the shin, making his legs buckle and fall down, but as he did, he took Zach with him by tripping his own legs in the process. They fell down hard onto the ground, Zach grunted as his face fell flat on a tile, while the back of Chance’s head made a terrible thump.

Chance was very disoriented at first, but he had to work fast, he grabbed a fist load of cheesecake, squishing it in his hands, and when Zach lifted his head up Chance quickly shoved a load of stuffing into Zach’s mouth, most of it actually getting in, but many bits crumbled into Chance’s chest and belly. Zach looked stunned for a moment, then Chance braced himself at the right moment as Zach slammed his fist down onto Chance’s stomach making him jolt hard. “Asshole!” Zach yelled as he called punched down again, no food came out of his mouth as he spoke, meaning he actually ate it when it was shoved in. He punched down three more times making Chance jolt up a few times as he did, Chances eyes where wide and he gasped every time it happened, he started to try and move away from the blows, holding his arms to his stomach, but Zach only started punching his back. Zach started to stand up but as he did Chance kicked at him, calling

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out in half laughter half anger. “You ate it! Wasn’t that bad was it!?” Suddenly Zach kicked in right where he crouch would have been, if Chance hadn’t moved out of the way right in time, landing him a nasty kick right dead center in the ass. “Get!” Zach kicked him there again. “Out!” Zach gave Chance one big kick to the back of the head, making Chance throw up a little onto the floor, the pain in his stomach too bad to hold down anymore, leaving him Everywhere around him getting on one side of his face, glasses and hair. “Of!” Zach reached down and grabbed Chance by the shoes. “HOUSE!” Suddenly Chance was being dragged across the floor, arms held up to his face in protection, in the closest thing to the fetal position as he could do while he was being draped. Every little bump on the floor reverberated back into his brain. Zach walked past a table and when it came to Chance it smacked him across the forehead hard. Finally they got to the front door, and once they got there Zach walked out of the house.

Sweat was all over his forehead and armpits, he got a few feet away from the house where he decided to leave Chance right there, but before he walked off, he gave Chance a few good more kicks and yelled out “Stay out of my house! Don’t come back fagget!” Then Zach spit on the ground beside them both, and stormed past going into the house. Chance laid there, after a moment opening his eyes and unavailing his arms, finding every part of his body hurt but his arms, which he was thankful for. He was utterly dazed, and yet... Chance lifted his head, then his shoulders, then his torso, using his arms to lift himself off of the ground, actually moving himself, removing himself from the dirt, it was like peeling a scab off of your knee. He slowly stood up, finding new and new little (and big) pain spots. When he finally stood up, he looked around, but he wasn’t really seeing anything. It felt weirdly pleasant, the sun was very warm and it contrasted nicely with how the city normally was, nothing about right now felt lifeless, you could say that. He wanted to stay and stand in the sun for a little longer, but he known it wasn’t safe here, and he needed to sit down anyway. He could just unroll the windows on both sides in the car to let the warmth in. Chance breathed in and made to leave, but as he blinked and his vision cleared, he held in that breath. There ahead of him, where a neighboring house was, stood what Chance could barely make out as a

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little brown haired girl, in raggy clothes just like Chance used to wear, starred at him wide eyed, mouth a little open. He looked back at her a moment until she said. "Are you hurt?..." it took him a moment to reply. "...Yes..." "Did that bad man hurt you?" Chance gulped and started the attempt at limping away as he spoke. "I'm okay." "No your not!" She cried as he started getting away. "Your hurt! I'm telling the baby sitter!" Then just like that she turned away and ran off, greasy hair flying in the air as she went. Chance watched her go.

By the time he got to his car, he was very ill and getting even more slow, he couldn't just stay there, in case that girl really was going to tell this baby sitter and she (or he, you never know these days) checked in on in. So he got on the drive, leaving that plate behind as it was surely long gone, and drove off back into the deeper parts of the city. After a good few minutes of driving he stopped by a very deserted fast food parking lot, rolled down the windows and just sat there. He could have been thinking a few things over if he want too, how it went, he did Zach eat the food when he shoved it in? Must have been the easiest way to get to speak. If Zach was going to eat more of it still not dirty on the plate, that was actually very in character of him. Lots of other things, but something else was going on, energy that was practically kicked out of him just now. He was doing... Very well actually, in this project. Only his boss was messed up. Eating, getting someone to eat what he wanted was the goal. And he was in a sense passing it with flying colors.

He drove home after a while, he probably sat there for over an hour, but he wasn't really sure. By the time his apartment block was in sight it almost looked exactly the same in the sky as it did when he left, which seemed very strange to him. He got out of the car, locked it. Wobbling a little the first few steps but then got a little more on the straight path. Chance wasn't really looking around him, since he didn't want to notice anyone near by seeing him injured as that might 'break his zen' but he catch a glance of a figure in light clothing by the front door, when he got fairly close he slowly turned his head upwards. Before him was Drako. "What the Hell?" Drako stood there, lip upturned, he was wearing a cartoonish amount of red today, red sleeveless tank top, reddish brown pants, and to tie it off perfectly he

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has a bright red bandanna around his head. Chance took a moment to process all of that, by the time he almost got his words out, Drako spoke again. "What the Hell happened to you?" Chance blinked a few and stood a little taller. "I was in a fight." Chance started to stumble away into the apartment but Drako said started to follow a little behind him. "How did THAT happen?" Chance took a deep breath then explained "I made food for my brother, he wouldn't eat it, I made him eat it, we got into a fight." "Jesus-" Drako stopped following him as he got further into the lobby. Drako watched him go, by the time Chance left Drako just shook his head and walked back outside. As Chance went up the stairs, his legs limped behind him painfully, he took steady breathes as he went, thoughts of how he would spend the... Chance looked up quickly jerking his head in the process, he was only about five feet away from his apartment, when the front door swung open. Out of the doorway casually peeking out, was the head of his creepy neighbor... Immediately the neighbor saw him, his fisheyes growing wide like plates, then he jumped out of the apartment, like a rat.

Chance also jumped at him, forgetting any aches on his body. He walked pounced on the man grabbing him by the coat collar and slamming him against the wall. "Ah!" The man cried trying to struggle away, the man even though he was clearly old, was thicker than he looked under that coat, and kept almost getting out of Chance's hands, Chance held onto him firmly using his height as a advance. He should have said something to him, to scare him off or something, ask him what he was doing in his apartment, what the Hell was he doing staring at him all the time, what did he want, maybe just simply threaten to call the police or something. But he did none of that, just held onto him tightly looking at him, he got visions. Visions of instead of fighting Zach today, he fraught Jake, and won. He held onto Jake's collar hard, then slamming Jake into the hall his head bounding like a ball. Then Jake turned into Zach, and Chance held on so tight it catches a little of his brother's neck along with the actual clothing. He remembered all the terrible things Zach did to him, the time he left him out in the rain two miles away from home, the time he tied him up naked to the open front door, all the time Zach had just beaten him up for no reason. No, he should

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have actually poisoned that cheesecake, then right as Chance hit his head against the wall one more time, Jake turned into Dad, staring up at him with confused and hurt eyes, but Chance was not moved, it was too late to feel sorry now, where was that bastard? Then as soon as he showed he left, and turned into Chance's boss (which was a unpleasant transformation indeed) and his boss just looked at him in hotty stunned silence, like 'how could this kid have the audacity?' He thought about how his revenge didn't work, how it had gone to the wrong person, and how his boss would never get to experience the shock and disgust of getting what he had coming to him, and how that rude thing he said to Patrick had gone unpainted.

Chance got red in the face and held onto the collar firm as he got right up into the man's face, they breathed in the same air. "YOU STAY AWAY FROM PATRICK WHEN I'M GONE!" he screamed, but when he moved his head back, suddenly his boss wasn't the boss anymore, it was Tracy, shaking, fully in his arms, looking up at him with wide wet eyes, only two tiny delicate words fell out of her mouth. "Oh God..." Chance dropped her suddenly hard onto the ground him backing away a few feet into his own apartment without knowing it, the creep scurried up and swung his front door open and slammed it shut behind him, Chance followed suit not wanting anyone else to see him there, he carefully locked his door and turned around, all sense of pain gone in his body. Without even catching his breath, he checked all over his house, every little spot that was hiding anything. He couldn't find anything amiss, something about his bed seemed a little off, too neat... it was no matter, as the longer he walked around re checking rooms, the more he smiled, checks growing warm with joy and pain now totally forgotten. His brother surely did not enjoy that food, however much he exactly ate, but what he didn't know was within the filling of the cheesecake was laced inside, a fairly large amount of pure fuzzy white mold. The sort spotted with green. It was the night Tracy thrown out some old cheese of his, Chance fished it out of the trash, even before he was sure he was going to go through with all this and started the process of growing that old. In a tight, hot place, he kept it in his bathroom sitting right by the window seal so it could get as much sun as possible, and after hot showers he left the door closed for as long as possible, because warmth

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and humidity are great for the growing of mold. When it was finally time to use that mold, it was a squishy wet mass, with fuzzy white tops like Black Sea urchins, the green in it where more like spots.

You would have no idea the underlying base layer for the mold colony was cheese. Chance of course had to grind it up, and he colored it white and yellow using food dyes. Grinding it up was not safe, not in a closed space and even more so without eye or glove protection, but Chance didn't care about that. Now that was going to leave a texture that was not the normal consistency of cheesecake. So, he needed to add some extra ingredient he could hypothetically tell Zach it was in case he asked, which he didn't think he would, and he didn't. He took a short trip to the lab in a department that was not his own, inside was a collection of rats and another of mice. Inside of a little baggy Chance collected a small amount of mice shit, only the ones that where most dried. And when he got home (and got Tracy out of his apartment) he removed any clear hair visible from the shot, sanding the shit down ever so gently, and mixed it in with brown chocolate and put it in the freezer to be hidden inside the cheesecake here and there. He didn't need to add it, but since the pig incident with Josh he hadn't had the chance to use animal droppings and he really wanted too, the mold was actually much more likely to be noticeable then the shit given how tiny and hidden it was. The goal of the mold was to be as powerful as possible, as you can imagine eating mold is not safe, sadly that wouldn't have been enough to seriously hurt him, but given how intense the batch was, he might be getting sick very soon here... Chance smiled and sat down on his couch and turned on the TV. Nothing was stopping him now, and his next was going to be big. Very big...

The letter: Chance got around to writing that letter to Zach earlier that night. It went by in a flash, only taking him two minutes to write! It went something a little like this-

To Zach:

From Chance.

You were right, I did poison you. On November 9th I came to your house and harassed you, leading to a fight where I forced you to eat a handful of

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cheesecake. It was contaminated with highly toxic mold, along with little prices of rat feces. This was revenge for all the bad things you done to me growing up. Even back when all I wanted was for us to be friends. You were always cruel to me without reason, probably before I could even remember. You were dead set on making my already difficult life even worse, when we should have been helping each other. You don't want pity and I won't give you any, your crudity to me caused this, that is why I did it."

Chapter 9:
Mother

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His phone rang, he picked it up answering it without even looking at the ID, he didn't want to reach over for his glasses, he was so hard of sight without them his eyes squinted so tight he looked like an offensive 1940s cartoon. "Yeah?..." Chance whispered, he took two ibuprofen but it had a disappointing effect. "Hey, it's me Finn. Are you okay?" Chance groaned a little 'could have asked that last time I saw you.' Chance thought bitterly. "Yeah... What is it?"

"Wellllll, ah, Josh got that promotion. And next Sunday he's going to have a party at Macy's, and we're all going. So you know, be there. I'll tell you the exact time when I know it if course." Chance blinked a few times then moved around in bed, the aches where Hell, but he still sat the phone down and groped around in his bed to find his shirt and glasses, he didn't want to talk to anyone without being properly clothed, phone or not. It might have taken longer than was reasonably expected, but it was better than hanging up, and besides he knew Finn would wait on him. "A party? ... Sure I'm invited?" "Yeah..." Finn said with a very childish laugh, the sort of laugh you make to get your school bully off of your back 'if you seem as weak as possible, they leave you alone... Ideally...' thought Chance bitterly. "Hey, I've been wanting to ask you something, about last time you were around." "Mhh?" "Josh mentioned someone, who went by Larry... Who is that?..." "... "Forget about it, I was just confused about all that, me and Wayne were talking earlier-" "Does Josh actually want me to go?" There was a pause, Chance blinked a few times slowly, didn't even really breathe, just listened quietly. Then eventually "He didn't specify mention you, but I know he's going to want you there, he always gets-you know, when people don't

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show.” “I’ll think about it.” Chance said. “Oh... Any other plans?...” “In fact-“ he looked over to his kitchen, a light grin on his face. “I just might.”

That morning, he woke with a lot of pep in his step.

He decided he wanted to get to work early, so he pulled on his coat and his boots, ran out of the apartment and locked the door behind himself, as he did he eyed the neighbor’s door, he wanted to press charges on the creep or maybe even simply make a report to the landlord, but he didn’t. He had dirt on himself, so he didn’t want to draw any sort of attention to himself in anyway. Chance went down the hall and down the stairs, boots making loud thuds as he went along because he was in such a hurry he didn’t worry about the speed. Then, as soon as he reached the bottom of the steps, a hand stopped him in his tracks hitting almost the entirety of his chest, making Chance gasp a little bit at the surprise. The one holding out their hand to him, was one of the thung boys who Drako hung around with. It was the goon boy, and just like twins, the taller more handsome one appeared. Chance tried to move away but the older boy blocked his path, a sly smile on his face. “Where are you off too?” The teen asked him a laugh, Chance, feeling a change in himself since last night, simply stood in front of them harrowed eyed and said, “None of your business.” In their brief shock and amusement, they almost let Chance walk by, but he got blocked again by a black boot in his path. “That’s cute.” And the teen leaned in closer. “We just want to have a little talk.” Chance eyed him hard, thinking on what he could say next that would either insinuate a fight between him and two older black teenage boys (which didn’t seem like a very fairly unfair thing to him) or finding some way to get out of this. Then suddenly from behind there was loud steps and a sudden halt. “What you two doing?” Chance glanced behind himself, it was Drako, frowning a little, almost seeming clammy. “Don’t worry about it.” “Aw man-“ Drako walked in beside Chance-only sutally though. “Leave him along, he’s not going to do anything for ya.” The big teen now seemed a lot less interested in Chance.

“Hey, we’re trying to do something here, could you please, you know, fuck off.” Drako glanced at Chance for a moment sadly, then moved aside a

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little. "Come on..." Drako whined, but soon the goon grabbed him by the arm and pulled him even more away. Chance once again tried to move away but got blocked again, this time though Chance pushed him away hard. "I have places to be, I'm not dealing with you rats." "What the fuck did you just say?" The big teen said, first words laughed out, the second spat out. "You heard me..." Chance groaned and walked off. He half expected to be hit on the back of the head pretty soon, but it didn't happen, and he left the apartment block and hurried off to his car (though he tried to not too like he wasn't in too big of a rush) and got in and started off quickly. As he drove off, he tried to see if he could get a glance of them in there, but it was too obscured. 'Did I leave that kid in a bad spot?' Chance wondered, he didn't actually really care about that kid too much, but how Drako acted in there really disturbed him, he didn't like the idea of someone getting in trouble over him. That seemed just, morally wrong.

He drove for a while, the city wasn't as bright as it was yesterday, but it wasn't too bad looking either, he had seen it much worse. By the time the building was in sight he re-remembered his score spots, the pain was so bad other people might have called off of work, but Chance was too close to slow down, and still hiding high off of his last win, it really did make up for 'that' things Josh said, and even made up for not being able to get back at his boss. He would have tried getting at his boss again, but he couldn't wrap his head around a way of doing it without seeming too subspinous, and he known his boss was the sort of person to report anything weird he saw, and he couldn't be caught, not now it's too close. Chance stepped out of his car taking a big suck of air as he stood on his leg in a bad pose and walked to the building. Everything beside of his health was totally normal. Normal, expect for one weird thing, his lunch bag was completely empty, still though he held it by his side... He went in and one of the girls at the front waved at him, but she gave a little gasp when seeing him. "What's wrong with your face?" Chance just shrugged. "I don't... Eh..." "Be more careful!" Chance gave her a odd look then moved on, not leaving his lunch bag in the kitchen like he did most days, instead taking it into the lab with him for work, which wasn't allowed, so hopefully the boss or any snippy girls didn't see that...

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He went over to his chair and sat down hard, signing. He looked around, no one else was there, not even Patrick, he should be coming very soon though, so he had little time to ask, this right here, was going to be the most risky thing out of everything he had done so far, even more risky then going right into the castle to fight the dragon (going to Zach's house) quietly he slowly stood up, and walked over to the front door and slowly shut it so it didn't attract any attention, then he looked over to the lab equipment and better yet- samples and medical waste bin, over to his left....

When Patrick did come to work, it was about fifteen minutes later, but it felt like a really long time to Chance, Chance was just looking through some things on his computer waiting for Patrick to come around, there wasn't actually a lot of work around here to do without him, he was very dependent on the guy that was for sure.

Patrick walked in, his eyes a little baggy but when he saw Chance, he gave him a little smile. "Hey, how are you doing toda-" Patrick shook his head. "Woah, Chance are you okay?" Chance smiled back at him, but it came out a little weirder than he meant it too... "I'm fine... How are you?" "No, I mean you look like you got ran over from a truck, what happened?" Chance cringed a little, pushing his lunch bag further away with his foot, as it was on the ground. "Nothing..." Patrick frowned at him and glanced over to his side of the lab 'Shit, I hope he doesn't notice anything different' Chance thought, if that happened, he would just die. "Okay... Sorry about that. If anyone did that to you-" Patrick laughed a little, putting his fists together and said quietly "Let's just say my dad was in the Army, he knows people." Chance nodded but felt a little weird about that. "But hey-" Patrick said as he got his lab work started, moving random objects here and there. "Girls like dudes with a little bit of-mess, you know? At least I think they do. I guess getting into fights is objectively cool." Patrick glanced over to him again. "It was a fight right?" Chance cringed even more and tried looking at his computer screen. "Sort of, I guess, I ah-don't really know anymore." Patrick frowned again but looked over to his own. There was an awkward

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silence for a while, both of them getting to their work. Chance's mind was racing, knowing he had to get that bag out of here, he said he had to go out and get something really quick and ran off to his car and placed his lunch bag in the back seat, hiding it by laying some coats and random junk he had over there on top of it, and then he snuck back in like a kid who had just eaten some treats right under his parents noses. Chance sat back down and got some work done while Patrick finished putting some tests into the freezer.

"Sooo..." Patrick asked after a long while, Chance sitting up straight but not looking to him. "How's the baking and stuff going?" "It's going..." Chance glanced to his computer, then to his hands, finally saying. "It's been going good." "What do you actually normally make anyway?" "...All sorts of stuff... I'm making meatloaf soon." "Ah cool. I don't personally like meatloaf, but to each their own." "I don't like it either." Chance said with a little laugh. "I'm making it for someone else." "Ah, that's cool." Patrick nodded. Chance didn't really want to say more about it, he wanted a ten-foot pole away from anything Patrick and his plans.

Chance smiled at Patrick but he seemed to miss it, Chance wanted to ask him what he was doing lately, the hobbies he had been up too and what did he enjoy doing after work (well, Chance didn't enjoy doing his fun little cooking project for the most part, but it wasn't like Patrick known that) there was all sorts of things Chance wanted to ask Patrick, but he known better. The more Patrick could know of Chance, the more he wouldn't like him. And Chance didn't want to think about that. He liked the idea-the feel, if them being friends. If Chance could, he'd kill Josh a million times over to have a friend like Patrick, but they weren't friends, this wasn't some sort of fantasy land they lived in, they weren't friends, they really barely even known each other- Chance visibly cringed deeper into his chair. He got a sudden mental image of Patrick, sitting on some old 1980s talk show, being asked some unpleasant questions from one talking head in an out-of-date suit. "Would you say you and your old coworker were close?" "No no... We barely talked and never spoke outside of work." "I see a see; did you have

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any idea he was capable of doing such things before it became publicly known?" "I had no idea! He was always sort of a weird dude, very creepy and all that, I always tried to be nice to him and all, but now that all of this has happened..." Chance signed and stood up from his chair. Patrick looked to him as he did so, and he asked "Feeling, okay?" "Yeah... Why?" "You're still not looking good their buddy." "I... Don't feel very good. I'm taking a break..." "Okay yeah, I mean maybe you should go home, I can't do the actual reports for you, but I could basically write everything down here on some paper, and all you'd have to do is copy and paste it to the PC the next day." Chance shook his head no at him. "I owe you anyway! Besides you really should, it's not like you don't have extra vacation days anyway, you should go on one!" Chance frowned, it was true.

"No, I just need a break..." "You really could use a breakout of his city anyway." Chance frowned even deeper, making Patrick look very worried in return which embarrassed Chance a little making him quickly run out of the room, he didn't mean to make Patrick feel weird-he just didn't get it. Chance was only feeling sick, he wasn't feeling bad. Even with the beating and the weird moment he had this morning with the teens, he still felt like a monster. And the next one was it, everything else didn't matter, none of them would really ever not know if he didn't tell them, the next two-the LAST two, they were going to be different. And there were some things people like Patrick should just never know about, but he did appreciate the concern, it... Made him feel weird.

As soon as work ended Chance rushed home, he had to get something into the safety of his apartment as soon as possible, he half expected to see those teenagers waiting for him, but they weren't there. Some other people were waiting around (seeming like they really did have nothing better to do) but at least there wasn't any trouble at all. When he got up there he expected to see that creepy guy by his door, but no one was there. He got into the apartment quickly and locked the door behind him. He checked to see if the thing inside of his lunch bag had thrallled, and it did. He (with gloved hands) laid the thing into a plastic bag, and up his lunch bag into the bathtub and filled it with water, letting it sit there for a while, he would wash

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it fully out later. After he took off his gloves he went to work right away on the meal. It was going to be Meatloaf. Tomorrow he was going to travel to see his mother, he would miss a workday, he would just call him sick, he had a few people who had seen him the day before he could agree that he didn't exactly look all that amazing. He decided he wouldn't call ahead, that might make it weirder and get her thinking too much on it, he didn't suppose Zach had told her anything about what was going on-Zach hated the old bitch, so he figured he was safe as far as that went. Chance couldn't exactly blame him, she hadn't done half of the horrible things she had done to Chance that she did to Zach, but there were definitely some bad moments, Chance had no way of knowing, but he thought before he was around the age of a toddler, Mom had treated Zach in a similar way. But even if that wasn't the case, she actively neglected him, leaving him without food or water, at times when she wanted to go out, but it was a weekend, she would trap the both of them in a locked room with only a little to get by. Imagine, being trapped in a room with Zack for two days.... But now, he was onto making the actual meatloaf. He'd think more on that.

Chance didn't know a lot about the thing he was adding into it, so he treated it like it would die in the heat, and since meatloaf has to be in the oven for at least a hour (at least that's how he's done it before.) this was going to be something he would have into it after. He got out everything he needed- Ground beef, an egg, ketchup, salt, lots of plain breadcrumbs, onion power, and lately garlic powder. Chance never really liked meatloaf for anything remotely like it, but with everything in front of him he couldn't help but wonder if there was a way to make it taste better, a lot of the things that went into it were really good. Before he started mixing the ingredients together, he preheats the oven, just like the guide he read online before told him too. Then he got out a big bowl then a little bowl, he put the ground beef and bread crumbs into one and mixed them together for a while, it actually took longer than it should have because he had to break apart the meat for a while first before adding the bread crumbs, for some reason it was sticking together which it should not have done that. Then in a different little bowl he added the egg along with the onion and garlic powders, and let those mix together, mixing them was quite peaceful, he wouldn't have

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mindful doing it for a while, but eventually he had to stop, and he poured what was in the little bowl into the bigger one, and mixed them all together as finely as he could. By the end it was looking very nice, it almost reminded him of cookie dough. Then he got out his shallow baking pan and slowly he shaped it into it, getting his hands covered in the stuff by the end, it sort of looked like Chance had gotten very sick, and had puked into his hands but some of it had gotten out. Once he was done shaping it, he gotten out his ketchup and carefully poured it over it, he didn't want it to overflow, then he slid it into the oven and shut the door. He was going to leave it in there for an hour. Chance re-checked the baggy in the fridge, he wanted to just stare at it all day until it had gotten into his mother's mouth, but that was crazy- more crazy than a lot of things he had been doing lately- so he shut the door and sat down on the couch, sighing deeply. It felt a lot better then it was...

It was early in the morning. He called in saying that he was feeling very under the weather and wouldn't be there today, the woman on the other end didn't sound particularly convinced, but it wasn't up to her anyway. After that was over, he got out the meatloaf from the fridge and let it get to a more medium temperature, it didn't really do that even after a while, so eventually he just gave up and gave the meatloaf a treatment, infecting it with the special ingredient, out of everything he had put into his special meals lately, this one should be the hardest to notice. Chance got into his car and drove off with the still cold meatloaf. No one bothered him while he was going out, to which he was very thankful for. The sky was dull and boring, the clouds a nasty color, as he drove along every so often it rained, it was lightly raining when after a hour of driving he took a little stop to a gas station to go to the bathroom, while he was there he brought himself a drink and a bag of chips, he still have four more hours to go...

He had where she lived written down, he knew she would still be there because one of mom's friends was on social media and that woman sometimes mentioned her mom online, they weren't exactly friends but they

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had a few things in common, mainly they lived in the same area, they used to do hard drugs, and now settled on alcohol instead. Mom wasn't social like she used to, nor as spiritual or experience speaking, mom stayed at home all days and had been for at least a decade at this point, it looked like now she was just waiting to die.

His mother was a very unreasonable person. She was born into a nice thing, but it quickly turned black. Her parents divorced, her mom caught her father cheating, even then she wanted to make it work, and thought it was going good before, but dad didn't want to deal with the stress of her anymore and got the papers written up. Her mom wasn't social like a very humble rural person in comparison to her father, her father being a very powerful man in the Midwest, and because he really fought for it he got their daughter. Mom didn't handle that well and eventually fell down a bad path, and died by jumping off of her car while it was moving and cracked her own neck, no one could tell if that was suicide or mania, either way that event was really well known to everyone in the area because before the divorce mom was a very respectful and helpful member of the community, the sort who would feed the homeless and needy even with no Churches or soup kitchens to prompt them into it. Her whole family was very respectful, so it was a big topic for everyone, all known about it, except for Chance's own mother, during the divorce his mom was three, then when her own mom died when she was twelve, but she only known about it in her twenty's. The father remarried very quickly with a much younger woman, and he would do so again two more times. The woman who raised mom was a very hardnosed well educated young woman, and once she had kids of her own, well...

She really started to go hard on mom. Oh, she gave a lot of reasons why, 'she's lazy' 'She's a bad influence on the little ones!' 'She's chubby!' 'She's a head red!' 'She's too loud!' None of them really mattered. She'd make a new one every day.

Soon mom started to change, a once fast and wise cracking girl, she

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became more aggressive and louder, flirty and wild. She smoked grass for the first time at 11, she lost her virginity at 13, she dropped out of school at 14 and at 15 she moved out of the house with a much older navy vet. That was the last time she ever saw her father, her stepmother and her half siblings. Soon things changed once at 17 she met with a very odd man at a bar in the early morning, he told her all about a group of people who lived all the way out in Arizona, he was a part of his group, this religious family. She became interested and left all of her friends and boyfriends and went out there. Years went by and she grown deeper into drugs and sex, growing closer to the gods because of what her friends where treating her, the community was once much bigger but after the death of their leader it had diminished, mom wanted to protect it so she invested a lot of time into making money to give to them so they could grow their reach. Then, she got pregnant, with Zach. Then she got pregnant agar a while later with Chance. Due to some of the... Odd activities of the group, mom didn't bring Chance and Zach over to see the group a lot, the local police where a little too aggressive with the group and she didn't want them seeing kids in the area, most people thought of them as being some sort of sex cult, but mom known it was so much more, on those grounds laying on the ground at night she saw things in the sky and flickering around at night. Sometimes if she was on a buzz or just wasn't paying attention, maybe even if she was just simply praying, she heard things, whispers advising her on what to do with her life, and she always listened. The kids got in her way, and more over they didn't serve her goals in any way, such ungrateful children. Only sometimes did they have nice moments, Chance could remember a time when him and Mom would lay together by the window at night, not taking.

They could listen to music together for hours until he fell asleep. But that was rare and only happens if the mood suited her. Most of the time she ignored him, there was times in his childhood he was very thin, so bad you see the outline of his bones, Zach got thin too but normally not as badly as he took food from Chance and sometimes from other kids. That was probably the tip off moment that led to CPS investigating Mom, it didn't lead to Chance getting taken away until he showed up to school one day with a big bloody gash on his face. Mom had thrown a mirror at night, and it

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broke, the cut was deep, but it might not have looked so bad if it wasn't for mom nor Chance washing any of the blood, plus the hair and dirt caught up in the blood. Chance was seven but still had no idea what proper washing and bathing was. He wasn't in the system that long, and Zach didn't even need to go. Mom got violent sometimes that was for sure, she brushed him and hit him without cause every so often, mostly when she was coming down from a high. Worse to Chance at least now, was how she never cared what Chance saw. Chance often saw her doing all sorts of drugs, even the very-let's say not so legal ones. She could at any day be passed out at a random spot from being just too drunk. She be red n had sex with the kids in the house, often not even bothering for it to be in a particularly private place. Even to the point of disturbing some of her lovers. Chance had seen her in the act many of times, and it got to the point where if he heard anyone making even a slightly exaggerated noise he would hide or run away outside, even at night. When Chance was 14, that's the point where everything changed, that was why he had to do this. Sure, she would be getting some punishment, she deserved it, and he could never really forgive her, but he'd still respect her as a human being. But this, this, it made her physically abuse, her drinking drugging and whoring look like nothing. Like a nat.

He had never been to the house she currently lived in, they moved around a lot but after a while she did settle into a house. He known where she was regardless. It was a dumpy little house out in the middle of nowhere, there was houses far away but they were all also quite dumpy and unimpressive. Chance drove up to it and parked, but there was a safe distance between his car and the house. He stayed there a while, he leaned back, breathing wanting to stand up but he didn't know how to say hello. Something started to scream into his ear, telling him he was doing something wrong.

Then something caught his eye, it was her. She was standing by the doorway looking at him, his eyes narrowed. Her eyes narrowed back. She looked the same as the last time he had saw her, only her hair was thinner, and she was a lot more fat. She wasn't a very attractive person, Chance never saw her at her peak, since she was one of those women sadly

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physically changed for the worse after getting pregnant, but even then, she downgraded a lot through his childhood. She was more busty, red haired, very southern sweetheart (in appearance) but how she was somehow much shorter than she used to be. She had light gray hair, in the middle of her head she was balding so badly it resembled the head of a middle-aged man who wasn't ready to just shave it off. She had fishlike eyes now, which he hadn't in years past, very Shadow over Innsmouth. The rolls hung very well over her crouch area, fat was also below her elbows and knees, even toppling onto her chest below her chin. Her clothes were very poorly fitting, she clearly wore no bra underneath it all and overall was very messy and unclear. Eyes looking foggy, not so much like someone who had no deeper thought, but like someone who had gotten lost inside their own inner monologed and hasn't come home in a very long time. If there was one thing that was nice Chance could think of, he thought she looked a lot better like this than she did in her younger years, when she had that far off look, she was nicer, sometimes even like a positive stoner roommate or something of that sort. But when the life came back, it wasn't as nice. They looked at each other for a while, neither of them saying anything while they stared, he couldn't tell if mom known who he was or not, perhaps she was trying to work it out in her mind, or maybe she didn't know who it was but wasn't sure what to do. Chance thought it would be very funny if she turned back and shut the door on him, but then again, that wouldn't have been funny at all.

Eventually Chance took in a deep breath and didn't let it go. She clearly wasn't going to do anything. So, he grappled the wrapped-up plate and got out of his car and shut the door behind him, going over to the house. As he did so he noticed how she had a slightly scared look on her face, like she thought he was going to hurt her for something. He wasn't going to hurt her, no not at all. She was going to her herself. The closer she got the clammier she became in appearance, not wanting this to turn into another Zach encounter, he stopped a little bit away from her and stood still, holding the plate by his side. Mom opened her mouth to speak but then shut it again. So, Chance spoke for her. "Hello." "...Hey?..." Mom groaned out, cocky like a male toad. "It's me, Chance." "Yeah-Yeah I know." She stood even a little

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more back, opening her door from behind without looking so she could take even more steps back while still looking at him. There was more of a pause between them, Chance wasn't exactly feeling like he wanted to play nice, so he imagined a nice version of what was happening here, maybe they had a real, much more normal falling out, and he just wanted them to be friends again, he was going to be the bigger man. But then it came to him, he was doing that. He was making things right. Almost, but life wasn't supposed to be fair. Did the Germans get what they had coming to them after World War two? Did they really suffer as much as they had inflicted on other people? Well, many died. But then again, maybe it wasn't enough. They still had still had a country at the end, there was no genocide they experienced. But that didn't matter, because they lost, and in the end Germany and the rest of Europe had peace again between each other. And now him and mom were going to have peace, they were going to be at peace today, and from now on. Chance gave her an awkward smile, now he really meant it, he meant everything he said now.

"Hey, can I come in?" "...Sure..." Mom leaned to one side, siding what he had in his arm. "What's that?" "Meatloaf. I made it for you." She stared at it for one moment, then slowly nodded. "Ah, I like that." She stepped in and moved to the side, Chance thought about what was going on here, he couldn't remember the last time he had walked into a mom of hers, much less welcomed. He stepped forward and into the house, and before she could even shut the front door, the smell hit him. It was the most terrible, intense smell he had been around in a long time. It was even more intense than the smell of the rotten pig flesh he had given to Josh and friends. (Though not as bad, content wise.) It all smelled of alcohol, mold, sweat and...Piss? Chance put on a good face but couldn't stop himself from wrinkling his nose. Everytime was a mess, it looked like she was attempting at becoming a horder, without the actual useless items to do it. So instead it was filled with trash. Most groceries from Walmart and whatever the door dash driver brought in. If looked like it should have had a lose cat walking around, but his mother wasn't really about that sort of thing. Mom didn't say anything as she walked over to her couch in the living room and sat down with a loud moan making Chance cringe. Chance then turned his head, and

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noticed how there was a mountain of trash blocking off the stairs to the second level of the house, there wasn't anyway anyone could get up there, let alone his mother, that's when he turned back around and saw it. In the far off corner piled around it towers of-stuff, a potty. A metal one with a removable bottom, one that could be build by hand. Chance cringed into himself, maybe she had given up the drugs, but it wasn't looking very nice here. "You look fine." Mom said making his eyes snap back to her, she wasn't looking at him, instead staring at her phone in a half confused way. "Right... Want me to heat this up for you? It's really cold."

"Yeah?" "Yes. Because it took me a while to drive out here." "Ah...Do you even live in the same state." Chance looked around him, there wasn't really anywhere he thought was okay to sit, there seemed to be only one spot that was decent for sitting on, and that was the one very sunken in spot in the couch where mom was now. "Yeah I do, but it's in the city." Chance turned to her and started walking in the kitchen. He would have talked longer before heating it up, but it seemed like he wouldn't have any trouble getting her to eat, besides, maybe the more he talked, the more he would mess things up here. As he got further into the kitchen, he stopped walking and looked around for a while. 'Oh no!' He cringed. 'There's no microwave!' Then he turned to the oven, thank God there was an oven. He opened it up and...There was trash inside, lots of it. Which could have started a house fire if it had suddenly turned on. Chance set the food aside and started pulling everything out and throwing it in the trash, the trash bag was surprisingly not filled. It took him a bit and he had to really scrub his hands after, but he got it empty. Feeling something was wrong, before actually putting the meatloaf in, he tested the oven first and... it didn't work. He tried it on all four burners, none of them worked. It must have been that the whole thing wasn't plugged in, because the oven had no life in it, and didn't light up when it was opened up. Chance gulped and slowly walked into the living room, gripping both ends of the plate like a scared child. Mom didn't see him come in but she nodded. "What's got you visiting me?..." She asked, scrolling through her phone. "I've been making a lot of food lately, for people and all. We haven't talked in a while... But still I wanted to make you something. And I wanted you to have some. I know you like meatloaf

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and all..." "That's sweet of ya." "Yeah..." Chance looked to the side a moment, he could have sworn he felt something.

"Here's the thing, there's no microwave in there, and the oven isn't working either, so I ah... I'm not sure how to heat this up..." Mom shrugged and put down her phone and reached out her hands. "Just get me a fork, I've had it cold before." Chance cringed, then walked off into the kitchen, handing her the plate with the food in it. As he went to grab a fork, finding it very difficult to locate with it all being quite scattered about here and there, his mom unwrapped the plastic. Chance walked back into the living room, but when he got there he found his mom had stuck a bit of her finger into it and was sucking on it. Chance took a step away, had she already gotten some into it? Maybe. He walked over and held the fork up to her. "Don't point it at me." Mom whined as she took the fork. Chance didn't say anything as she started to cut the food. It sided nicely, less like a cake and more like well-cooked breed. She cut that part in half and before Chance could even decide if he wanted to stop this, she put it into her mouth and barely even crewed it a second. Chance moved back, he felt like something around near him again, his mind raced and he wanted to get away but he didn't know how to, where would he even go? They needed to talk anyway. His heart moved even faster and he started to feel sick, she ate another full bite, mumbling with pleasure nodding her head, she might have said something to him as well but he didn't perceive it. His mouth watered and he turned he head to the side quickly; he was sure something was next to him! He smiled at her as she are another bite. She was already half way over with it when she looked up, and in a rough voice and asked "Do you want some?" Chance shook his head. "I'm not feeling well." He was feeling great.

What mom didn't know, is that the meatloaf was infected with aids. Positive batch. He had injected it into her food after it was done baking. He used two positive batches, making sure it would get into her.

How long it would take for it to infect the rest of her body, Chance did not know. Even though he worked at a lab, he was not very educated in things

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like that, and what he did know he often learned on the job or if he caught Patrick in a talking mood. Patrick-Oh Patrick, what would he think of him. It was done now. "It's good. Ha! Maybe I should have had a daughter!" Chance smiled and nodded. As she finished the food, Chance felt himself relax into himself, he took the plate from her and washed it for over two minutes in the sink, wiping the plate after and washing his hands even longer after. The plate still wasn't clean to him, so he just laid it too the side for later, he walked back in, getting her a cold she wanted first. She took the drink in kind as Chance leaned against the wall. It was all over... For now. He smiled at her as she leaned back into her chair. "Yeah... Want a beer?" Chance shook his head. "I don't feel well, remember? Sorry, also I don't really drink." She narrowed her eyes at him. "On the straight and narrow I see." Chance looked away, not saying anything to that. He looked around a while, trying to think of a way to further the conversation, they could talk about anything now. "Watch any TV?" She shrugged. "There's nothing good on, but I put on those dating shows sometimes. Those are nice. Nice seeing those young people getting some, ha!" Chance just stared blankly. When she glanced back at him she gave him a toothy grin, my God, she had lost some. "What are you doing in the city anyhow?" Chance smiled. "It's for my job. Besides I like it busy." "Yeah? Well most cites are shitsholes, so I don't get the appeal in it for ya. What do you do?" "I work at a lab." "A lab huh? So you're a smart guy now. Hey, remember when I used to work at a zoo, and I took care of those ostriches! They were like those little dinosaurs in Jurassic park!" Chance smiled and nodded. He didn't actually remember but he known what she was talking about.

She had talked about those times a lot, since they were after she had left her father and stepmother, but before she had left her navy vet boyfriend, those where fun times for her, the best. Even though she hadn't found the gods yet, and long before she had lost the pure faith. Chance wished he had had that, a time where he ran around having mindless adventures doing whatever (and whoever) he wanted, times to be a free retard. But he couldn't think of any time in his whole life like- oh, no, those times were now. And he was enjoying it. "You sure do live out here on your own mom." Chance said. "Yeah?...If you're going to get on my good side so you can

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bum over here, you're not allowed to, I'm a solo girl." "No no, I just think it's interesting you live out here. I live in a pretty stuffed up place compared to out here. It seems peaceful." "Eh..." she said, cringing. She turned to a random corner of her room like she expected it too explode. Maybe Chance did too.

Chance looked to her and smiled a little. "Eh, since I'm here anyway-" "Shouldn't you be at work?" "Huh? Oh ah-" Chance laughed a little, putting his hands into his pockets and leaning more to the wall, he rather wouldn't touch anything around here that he couldn't easily wash off, but it didn't matter so much, he was just feeling like a pansy. "Maybe I should be, but I wanted to see you today. And I already made the meatloaf last night. I'm honestly surprised you ate it all cold." "It wasn't cold, it was room tempter." Chance nodded. "Well anyway, I uh, think I'll pick up around here a little bit, is that okay? Since I'm already here anyway." Mom shrugged a deep shrug and turned back to her phone after she had glanced at Chance. "You can, but I don't see the good in it. It'll just get messy again, damn thing has a great habit of that." He nodded and got too it; he could understand that.

Chance got home late, he stayed there for two more hours cleaning full gloves on. He of course didn't get all of it, nor was he trying, but he made it look a lot nicer in the kitchen, he actually got to the oven and saw that it was indeed unplugged, but didn't turn it back on as he worried it might burn the house down with the dust that might have been inside. He gotten home without incident, besides the strange creeping feeling following him home. When he got to writing the letter, it took him a long time, he sat there, in the dark, looking out of his window and watching all of the little people below, to see what they did, he wanted to say everything on his heart, but he in the end found that he didn't really cared what his mom thought. And besides, she probably wouldn't even read it twice. In fact, she might not even search treatment after finding out.

When she did read the little, she frowned deeper and deeper as it was read. She wasn't the one reading it. She sat in a police station, she had told them hours ago she had gotten a letter from Chance but hadn't bothered opening it, so one of the boys in blue went out to her house to get it, after

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they read it, she got to have it read to her. Her expression was dark, and she asked many questions. She felt feelings she couldn't quite understand, but whatever it was, she known that it wasn't rage, maybe closer to sadness. Fear, yeah. Everything else reminded her of things that hadn't been in her in a very long time.

To Mom:
From Chance.

On November the 18th, I came over to your house and fed you meatloaf. Inside of the meatloaf was AIDS. I harvested the AIDS from my job at the lab, it was positive. You know why I did this to you. And I forgive you now.

Chapter 10:
Stains on the porch, a night for hunting.

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It was just about to become night, the top of the sky was a dark, deep blue, pinched off at the top it was fully black. In the bottom the faintest light of blue could be seen. All across the ground lay little disturbed rocks, most of them had been turned around every so often by the rumble and crushing of cars and four wheelers going by. There wasn't anything like that now. There were no animals or even the faintest sounds of them, no wind, all stillness. It wasn't that where wasn't any life in the valley, it's that it was all hiding. It was Summer, the most intense time of Summer, when it's getting ready to hand the fun over to fall, but it has to get out one last raw, the days still warm, but that air at night, it had that smell. And the wild hit colder on the arm then it did before. While the sky was blue, the land was red. A dark reddish-brown dirt, burnt by years of intense Arizona sun. But it was very fertile inside. Not only was there lose rocks everywhere, but little patches of grass everywhere, there would have had a lot more of them, but the cars made them go away badly. All was still until out in the night, came a cry.

It was far away; you couldn't see it well from where it was. As it got closer it turned out to be a person, if it wasn't coming at you, you'd think it was a tree swaying in the wind. Still very far off, turned out the shape was a male, a lanky young male, not a lot of details outside of that. What was he going to? The house, there was a lonely tasteless house, with only one person inside. As the figure got closer, much more of him could be made out, and it wasn't a pretty sight. "Mama!" He cried, actual tears falling down his face, mixed in with dirt. He spoke in the voice of an eight-year-old, had the height of an eighteen-year-old, while his actual age was fourteen. That wasn't the first thing you really noticed about him. He was walking with a deep limp, one leg hoping the other sort of dragging, if looked like the movement of a baby deer with four broken limbs, that had to move. "Mama!" He yelled

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even louder, he got to the house and practically fallen on the tiny porch, smacking the bottom of the door until he got to real hits, he would have laid fully down but the pain in one arm was too much to bear, more tears fell.

“Mom! Please!” There was silence on the other end, but he kept on hitting.

“Mama please! Come out!” He started to fall further onto the porch but tried to prevent that by holding himself in place with his left hip but found it hurt even more. “Mama please!” The door opened, she looked out, then thrown the door open but not stepping out, he laid in front of her. Her eyes were wide. Her son’s lower jaw and neck had one long cut line, old purplish red blood leaked out a while ago now dried. Deep almost bluefish shadows where all around his eyes, his body was covered in dirt and his clothes were very messy, laying on him strangely. One leg was laying on an odd angle, but no clear injury could be seen. Even then, there was spots of blood all over the bottom of his shirt and top of his pants. “Mama!” He cried, tears falling down his face. “Help me!”

She shook, lib upturned. “Wa...What happened?...” he sucked in air, hiccupping a few times, legs shaking all of a sudden. “L-Larry-he hurt me! He’s going to find me!” She just stared at him. “Help me mom! Please help me! Ca-Call the police!” Tears started to prick up in her eyes; she shook even harder. The longer they waited there, the more worried he began, so he forced himself up making himself cry a little in pain, suddenly fresh blood came from a wound in his pants, she noticed that. “Help me!”

“L...Larry? He’s coming for you?...” “Yes! He h-he hurt me! I I-“ he cringed and more tears fell down his face, he tried rubbing them, but his hand hit the cut on his chin, he didn’t seem to know it was there. “I got away, but he’s in his jeep! He’s going to hurt me again! Mama help me please!” She stared at him even longer, no tears fell out of her own eyes even though it seemed like they would for a second there, her shaking stopped, as his went on. “Help me please!” She stood a step bad, more blood coming from his pants, he tried moving to her but felt dizzy. “Mama!” Suddenly, she shut the door. He stated there for a moment, then he gasped a few times, almost cried, then stumbling left her porch, falling onto the ground before going off back into the desert, fresh tears coming from his eyes.

As the time when on he got slowly as he tried harder to get away.

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Eventually as the sky turned from blue to black, the boy started to hear the distance roar of a vehicle getting closer, he started to debate whether or not it would be safer to just lay on the ground as see if him being immobile would go better, or did he really want to go down like that?

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Larry

Chance laid there, it was night, a dark night. He was supposed to be at work. He missed it two days ago so he could visit mom, yesterday he didn't go either he just laid there in bed. They called him, he didn't answer. His boss called him personally too, he didn't answer then either. Then Patrick called him, that caught his eye, but he couldn't. He let it sit there. He didn't do anything yesterday, he didn't eat, or use the bathroom, he stayed in bed the whole day. He never slept, he last slept the night he went out to see his mother, since then he hasn't. Was he doing a lot of thinking? No, no not really. There wasn't much to think over. He was supposed to be getting it over with, but something held him back. Josh was going to have that party on the weekend, he might have showed up, but he didn't know if he had time, could he make up for it? His body ached badly, but he still could not see the reason for getting up. The lights had went off half an hour ago, they had been left on in the living room, which was his only source of light because after writing the last letter he closed all the curtains. He had no idea why the lights went out at first, he imagined it must have been something wrong with the building, they weren't cutting his lights off, it wasn't that sort of apartment block; besides he was a great tenant. He started to feel a little tired after the lights went out, he wasn't tired at all before no matter how long he was actually up, but now he could almost go to sleep. Outside of the room he heard a lot of noises, like the sounds of

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people chatting in hushed voices, like they were all going to run out unless they missed an important date. He couldn't see what had caused this, there wasn't any storm was there? He could tell the voices came from far below, but the wonder nagged at him, and soon he known he had to go out and see what it was. He couldn't figure out why, but he wanted to see what Claudia was doing in the mess.

He pulled one leg off the bed, finding that it was very sweaty, the other went out and he lifted himself off of the bed fully, finding his body couldn't stand normally at first, so he just stood there a second trying to get himself steady, once he was he walked to the other end of the room, and pulled on his boots. He went over to the living room and started pulling on his coat, he was wearing normal pants, strange thing was even though he put on a coat, he wore no shirt under neither, one of his chest hairs even got caught in the zipper line. It hurt but you wouldn't know by listening or watching his face, not even a light moan. He walked over to the door, unlocked it, and he looked out. There wasn't anyone in the hallway, but he could hear loud voices right by the door to the apartment across from him. Chance walked out of his room, locking it behind himself, then he knocked on the front door. When he did, on the other end he could hear a little gasp from the person behind the door. He saw the knob move, but then it stopped. "Who is it?" It was Claudia on the other end. "It's Chance. Chance Sailer." There was a light gasp on the other end, and the door was opened up quickly, it was Claudia, overtop of her was a slight black jacket, and underneath she was wearing blue pajamas and crocks, behind her was Drako, frowning deeply, he also was dressed very strangely, like he was in bed a second ago, their room was also dark. Everywhere was dark. "Chance!" She cried, with a little shock. "You look awful, are you okay?" Chance didn't say anything, didn't frown either. "What's going on here?" Claudia frowned and looked over to Drako, Drako looked just as confused as she did. "A storm man!" Drako yelled, not so much in anger but definitely some aggression. "It's not storming..." Chance frowned, turning a little to see if he could spot anything out of the window in their room. "It's not a storm!" Claudia whined glancing at Drako. "I don't think so anyway..."

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"It better not be like this tomorrow; I have something coming up..." Drako shrugged. "Oh, shut up!" Claudia said looking back to Chance. "I think the heat and water are off too. There off for us, anything working in your apartment?" Chance shrugged. "I don't know. My lights aren't on. How long has everything been off?" "Where you just asleep? It's been off for a while."

Suddenly there was an alert notification on Claudia's phone, she pulled it up to her in a flash reading it. "There's a storm coming! It's almost here!" "Known it!" She swung over to him, red in the face. "This is serious! a hurricane!" Drako went glum. Just there was even more noise below. "How? Wasn't it going to be a normal storm or something?" "I have no idea! But it says we need to bunker down. There's a safe house across town, but I don't think there would be any taxes or uber out right now... Let's go!" Chance got out of the way. "Shouldn't we get stuff first?"

"No I... I don't think we really have time for that, the storm should be here soon, right? Maybe we need to bunker down in the apartment, it shouldn't be that bad, right?" Chance pursed his lips and reached his hands onto their apartment, pushing past Claudia making her walk into the hallway, he lightly put his hand on Drako and moved him out of the room and into the hallway with his sister, as he shut the door. They both looked at him, but he didn't notice it as he quickly ran through the hallway and to the stairs. After a moment Claudia went after him, her holding Drako's hand. As Chance went down the stairs, better and better he could hear the voices of people below, and surely enough when he got their people were huddled together in groups. Outside through the windows could be seen the wind, blowing hard. Chance started going to the front door, but Claudia went up to his side. "What are you doing?" Chance looked to her. "I'm going to take you and Drako to the storm shelter, look up on your phone the directions." "Bu-You have a car?" Chance didn't say anything as he opened the front door, Claudia and Drako following behind him. The wind wasn't unbearable, but it was clear it was going to get worse very soon. Now the night was-of course, naturally always dark, but this dark was different. If there was light above then the thickness of the clouds above would have been shocking, those clouds came together quickly, within the space of five hours, those

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they have been waiting to do so for months and months, no one had just noticed them till now, there was no real summer in this city this year.

Chance unlocked his car, and Claudia and Drako huddled into the backseats, though Chance wouldn't have minded one of them going in the front. Then before the passengers were even properly seated, the car spun into action and drove the car out of the lot, Chance didn't bother getting his seat belt on. while he drove, Claudia pulled up where the storm shelters were.

Claudia explained where the shelter was, and where he should go to get there the fastest. He did as she said, already it was looking bad, wind was getting higher, trash should be seen flying around. There was a shocking lack of lights all around, it seemed to be a city-wide blackout. Then in the distance the shelter could be seen. Even with the headlights on, it was difficult to find a space for parking.

Once they did finally get into a spot, Chance watched them as they walked out, Drako almost went on to the building without them, but Claudia breathlessly turned around. "Chance!" She called through the wind. "What are you doing!?" He just stared at her a second, then shook his head saying. "I have to go." He rolled up his windows as Claudia called "What!? Get in!" But he didn't listen, the car started to pull out, almost running over Claudia's feet in the process as it was hard to tell where anywhere was, and he turned around and drove away back to the apartment. Claudia stood there, only noise the growing wind around them, as Drako grabbed her by the arm saying "Come on!" And they both walked into the building, a small group already in there, with more on the way.

By the time Chance was driving back, the wind was much, much worse. He saw things flying around as he went by, but he tried to ignore them. It seemed to be even darker. He parked the car and got out quickly, the outside was much, much worse, it almost swept him off of feet, then he got to the door and had to hold onto it sight to get it too shut, he found no one was in the main room anymore, they must have been in the basement. He went on, the wild could still easily be heard from the outside. He went up

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the stairs, the ground even felt a little shaky as he went and- BOOM! Outside like a clap from a god, he kept going. He got into the main hall and up to his own door, unlocking it and stepping inside. He locked the door behind him, signing as he leaned against it. Outside the rain finally came, along with more thunder. Chance kept his eyes shut, he tried to unzip his coat but at the end changed his mind when he found the room to be terribly cold, he still kept the zipper half undone exposing his chest. He started to think through it, did he have what he needed? Did he have the ingredients? "No!" Chance bitched out loud, eyes still closed. "I can't sleep now." Yea, he did have the ingredients to make it.

Then it hit him, he couldn't cook anything right now even if he wanted too. He needed to be able to bake the damn thing and put it in the fridge too. He slowly reached up his hand to his eyes and groaned, he was getting ready to scream in anger, when something stopped him. There was a noise coming from outside of his room, it was a little hard to hear because of the other things going on outside, but it was there all the same. Blues music. Very old blues music. It was coming from the wall across from where his creepy neighbor lived. Chance took a step closer to it. Yes, he was definitely the one making it. Chance cringed a little. But then again, if his neighbor wanted to listen to loud blues music during a thunderstorm, he could do that. What else was there to do? Yes, he needed to protect the letter! Those was just as important as actual giving people their meals. Outside of mom's anyway... As another impossibility loud crack of thunder rang out into the night, Chance walked into his bedroom and looked though his cabinet, where he found every letter. Then he placed all the letters into a little cardboard box, holding it tight to himself as he walked into the bathroom and pulled back the curtain, then he sat down in the bathtub laying the box carefully to his side, and he pulled the curtain back over once again and he laid down in the cold bathtub.

Hours went by, the noises got louder and louder, at one point he thought the building might have gotten hit. At random points the inside of the bathroom reverberated like a giant was stepping to him. Chance never slept the whole time, he might have wanted to otherwise, but the thunder

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made sure he wasn't able to do that. Then, slowly, the rain outside stopped, and the thunder fully went away. Chance laid in there for a while after it fully stopped, not wanting something unpleasant to suddenly show up right when he gotten out of the tub, but at a point he known it was safe, so he got up, finding his limbs to be very achy. He got out, everything in his apartment seemed okay, some items had fallen off of their respected places, but otherwise it was all alright. It was morning now outside, light coming into his apartment where the two windows were, like two giant eyes. He went into his bedroom and placed the letters back where they were before, safe and sound. He cringed a little, realizing, now was probably the time to send those things. So, he pulled them out of the cabinet he had just placed them into and took them into the living room where he one by one stamped and licked them. Then he carefully opened his front door and locked it behind himself. The creepy neighbor next door was still playing loud music, maybe he needed it to destress himself, well, whatever the case he wasn't going to be getting into Chance's room now. Chance went down the stairs, everything had a grayish pink lighting too it, the stairs where normally a dark red but with how the lighting was hitting, all-natural night and no headlights on, it had an innocent look to it Chance had never seen before. On the main floor, it wasn't a pretty sight. Four of the six windows were blasted in, glass everywhere, at least there wasn't many shards that had gotten to the path to the front door. Chance walked on, and when he got to the front door, he found it too be jammed, he went at it a few times, but the thing wouldn't budge, he started to pull with both hands, holding the letters to his body with his arms as he did so. He tugged and tugged but the thing wouldn't move. He started to grunt with the amount of force he was putting in, the damn thing was really stuck in there. Finally, he used one foot to give himself leverage ah- Suddenly at the same time the door popped open, and as it did so the door's glass became lined with spider web like cracks, not quite falling yet. Chance gulped and carefully walked past the door and shut it very gently. He wasn't sure how much of that was his fault, but either way he had places he needed to be.

He went out to the parking lot and... His car had been flipped over, fully on it's back. It's windows where all shattered and laying about here and there

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on the ground. on top of his car was another car that must have been parked nearby, the car on top was bigger and laid on his upright, if you squinted, you could imagine the one on top was eating the other. There wasn't really anything he could do for his poor car now, he hoped it wasn't permanently damaged, either way he turned his back to it and went out of the parking lot on his own. He started walking through the town, turns out it wasn't as much of a ghost town as he thought it was going to be. The traffic and passersby seemed to have diminished greatly, and he couldn't for the life of him see any homeless people anywhere. It was a pretty pleasant walk; there was no more clouds in the sky! The sun wasn't extremally bright however, and it had so color to it, no blue once so ever, but the white was pretty nice if he was being honest. The post office wasn't super far away but places you once thought wasn't far away becoming a lot more once you actually have to start walking to it. The walk might have taken about forty minutes or so, but it didn't really seem that long, the part that made it unpleasant was how bad his legs felt-and really his whole body honestly. Once he did get there, he saw that they weren't open, which might have been odd given this was open hours for them, but the storm must have messed up everything for everyone. Chance signed. "Maybe I should show up to work now, just to show up everyone who didn't show up there, ha ha..." Chance shook his head, no that probably wasn't a good idea, since he had been missing workdays. Besides, he had other things to do. He went over to the mailbox and slid his letters in one by one, hoping they would find the people they were meant for well. Then he pulled out his cell phone, finding that it had very low battery, either way he looked online for a moment for a local mechanic, he found one and tried giving them a call, but they didn't reply. They were open at this time, but it seemed like the mail office no one was in yet. Chance signed. "Oh well..." Then he looked out, he was sure the power wasn't going to be on in the apartment yet, so he didn't have a lot else to do...

Seems like he was going to be doing a lot of walking today... It took him a very-VERY! Long time to get too the storm shelter, he didn't exactly know where it was very well, but he sort of remembered from last night. After a

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while his legs stopped feeling bad, so the walk itself wasn't so horrible. He was surprised at how lively the outside of the building was, it was packed, but at the same time he did see a lot of people leaving. There was many people on the outside of the building talking to each other, Chance nodded at people as he went by, people seemed oddly friendly, it was off putting in a way. When he got into the building he didn't know where to look for them, he was trying to catch them before they went off to somewhere else, surely they wouldn't go straight back to the apartment. Everyone was chatting and bitching and laughing in one large front room, there wasn't a lot of seats was people where leaning on every side of each wall. If he hadn't walked all the way out here he would have just given up. He signed. "Chance?" Chance turned around, there a few feet away was Drako, walking too him. He looked like a mess but regardless there was a smile upon his face. "Where the Hell did you go last night?" He laughed. Chance frowned, there really wasn't an easy way to answer this. "I had to go back for something." "Well that was really fucking stupid!" Drako smiled and patted Chance on the back. "Claudia has been really worried about you!" He raised an eyebrow, 'she's worried about me?' That would have even days ago made him smile, but he didn't really have it in him. "You know I..." Drako shook his head. "I have to say, don't get offended or anything, but I used to think you were a weirdo, and a wuss. Not sure why, I just did. But it would kinda cool seeing you do that last night." "Thank you... Hey, I have two things I have to ask you, since Claudia isn't here." Drako raised an eyebrow. "Yeah? What's that?" Chance breathed in, this was his last chance to say it.

"A while ago she told me... You had a big exam coming up. Are you ah, working on it?" "What!?" He laughed-no actually, giggled. "Why are you two talking about my grades? Are you getting married? But yeah, I do." "Are you working on it?" "Yeah." "Really working on it?" Drako frowned, not saying a word. "Right... Well, I ah... Want to let you in on something." Chance moved in a little closer to him. "I have a lot of money, more then you think, and I want it to be some use. Claudia told me your into park stuff, that you want to be a park ranger, is that true?" Drako kept frowning but he did nod. "Well, if you pass this exam, I'll make a deal with Claudia that I'll pay for you to go to college. You need a bachelor's to even think of

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becoming one right? Well you can pick the field... Of course-" Chance waved his hands, cringing at himself. "You'd need to be volunteering and get a lot of other jobs along the way I imagine, I don't know a lot about this field, but I want to help you, if you put in the work."

Drako looked at him a moment then laughed a bit, glancing around him. "What are you on about?" "I'm sorry-I know I'm bringing this up at a bad time, but I really want to know now. It's important." "Well uh, I don't really know you well man... What would I have to do in return?" "Nothing." Chance moved away a little, though he didn't quite know why. "I don't want anything from you. I just want to know if you're interested." Drako laughed again, this time more loud, shrugging his shoulders. "Sure! I don't really get it though." "You don't have to." Chance looked all around them, he couldn't see Claudia anywhere... "Not sure how to process this man, I don't even know if my home is still standing!" "It is, some of the windows at the front of the apartment are busted though." "Wait, you just went back there and stayed? Really?" "Yeah..." "Why?" Chance pursed his lips, searching his mind but turning up on a blank. Drako turned his head and suddenly smiled yelling "Hey!" Then he turned to see Claudia walking up. "Chance! Where did you go!?" "Guess what!?" "Eh?" Claudia looked between the two, suddenly turning from a motherly worry, to a more 'pissed off' type. "Is the apartment damaged?!" "No! Ah, beyond some windows. No, he says he's going to pay for me to go to college!" Claudia eyed Chance, and he moved away a little, he got sweaty just by the look. "What?..." "I have... More money than people think, I sort of... Live below my means and... I never went to college myself..." Claudia stepped a little closer. "Seriously?" "... "No he's really going to!" "If you pass that exam... Otherwise ah-" Chance glanced at Claudia. "I guess you can keep it then. It's too much money to just dump it on you, so I guess a payment plan would be fine... Right?" "What are you talking about? Are you serious? We never discussed this?" Chance looked away from them both. "I'm sorry... I never had time to tell either of you, I've been so busy..." "No no-" Claudia put up her hands. "I'm not mad!"

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She stepped closer to him. "I'm just confused. I can't put him in college otherwise, so this is so helpful-" "If he can't pass the exam, then find a different way to use the money, get him in a trade or- something. Just move out of here." He looked out the window- he needed to go. "It's an awful place..." "Chance...Are you okay?" Claudia asked, all joy and surprise from her voice now gone. "Yeah, you don't look good-no offense." Chance stepped away even further. "You will pass that exam, right?" Drako nodded his head over and over again. "Yeah! Of course I will!" "...And can you get your sister out of here? If you get a job?" "Ah- of course!" "Chance-" Claudia moved in closer, but Chance cringed away. "You're scaring me, I appreciate all this-I don't even know what to say... But are you okay?" Chance shook his head. "No. No I'm not okay." He didn't want to involve himself in this anymore, quickly he swerved away and practically ran out of the building, jobbing from a long time until the building was far, far away. He never even got to ask Drako his second question...

Two hours passed, he spent about an hour and a half of it in the bank, he was making a big deposit, and they wanted to double-triple verify it. That was fine. He had his phone charging at the bank for a while as he waited, he was thankful the bank was actually opened, he wondered if it would be like the mail station, that would have really held him back. Chance didn't take the money he pulled out with him; he detected it to be slowly given to Claudia over time, like they-well, they hadn't agreed to anything. But it was out of his hands now. As it had gotten done, he unplugged then checked his phone-it was a notification that the apartments power was back on. He forgot his phone and the apartment staff were even connected in any way. He walked on though the town. As he went, slowly things became more lively, people showed up, more and more cars appeared, certain places where overflowing with water but it wasn't flooding the roads or anything. Mostly it had topped a lot of things over. When he was very close to the apartment but not quite in sight, his phone rang. He picked it up and looked at it, it was Tracy. He frowned. "What?" He said the second he clicked yes to the call, there was a pause. "Ah- Hey. How are you? I heard you got hit with the storm bad!" Chance pursed his lips. He kept walking, not really

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thinking of anything to say, only scowling (though she couldn't perceive it) "Hello?" Tracy said softly, but Chance replied so fast he almost cut her off. He replied by ending the call. She tried calling him again, so he blocked her number. She never called him again.

When the apartment was finally in view, he figured he'd find repair men moving away tipped over cars, or the electricity company, instead, there was an ambulance and three police cars. Chance frowned, pursing his lips. He paused for only a moment, then kept on, in the main hall he saw a few characters, two he known. One was the manager he saw very little off, he was talking to a police officer at one end of the room, and at a different end was another police officer talking to the old Jewish woman, she looked more disturbed then normal, was she even... Crying? Chance stood a little longer then he meant to, eventually the cop talking to the old woman glanced at him, looked back to her saying a few words then went over to Chance. "...Hello officer..." Chance spoke slowly. "Hello sir, just checking some things out here, there's been an incident. are you a resident here?" "Yes I am." Chance said with a nod. "Okay, okay. Are you Chance Sailor?" Chance nodded. "Okay. Could I ask you a few questions real quick?" "...Sure. What's wrong?" The officer pursed his lips. "Barry Pencilel has passed away." Chance pursed his lips. "Your neighbor. You live on the same floor."

Chance shook his head and stepped back a little. Same floor? Everyone else had left but that creepy guy besides him. He died? "I didn't know his but I know who you're talking about now. How did he die?" "It's under investigation. Just wondering if you heard anything strange last night." "Heard? Well yes, he had loud music playing, even during the storm. It had to be on a device not connected to the internet since this was during the storm, and we lost internet by then. Besides that, nothing." The officer nodded. "Okay, okay. We're just asking around." Chance cringed a little, looking to the stairway, then he looked back to the officer. "Can I go?" "Sure, sure. Tell us if you notice anything strange, or remember anything abnormal about that last." The officer said with a nod, though something about his tone told Chance he wasn't being very wise just running off like

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that, but he had things to do. Chance nodded back then scuttled away to the staircase.

Chance walked up slowly, he could hear things going on in the hall, when he actually got there was one police officer in the hall, and someone wearing a white full body suit, hair covered up face somewhat exposed with a blue mask over his mouth. There seemed to be a lot more people in his neighbor's room that went unseen. When Chance walked further into the hall the two other men watched him pass, so Chance walked on further quickly running his own apartment and shutting the door, not locking it.

When Chance got done, he slowly looked over to his TV, did he want to watch anything? No, no he didn't. Did he want to shower? No, no he didn't. He thought about placing the hot cake into the fridge and doing something else, but he couldn't think of anything he wanted to, so he needed to find a way to get out there. It was a long way away, over an hour. Wasn't as long as it would have been if he lived where he used too. But since his car was wrecked, Chance would need to call up an Uber. He picked up his phone from where he left it on the countertop, but just as he was typing, the phone rang, it was so sudden he would have otherwise jumped but wasn't feeling animated anymore. He looked at the ID and paused; it was Patrick. 'Was he in trouble?' Maybe the storm damaged his home or car, Chance hadn't thought of him in a while. He answered the call.

Once he answered, he heard on the other end Patrick says 'hello?' three times, then Chance replied with- "Yes?" "Chance?" "Yes." "Hey, are you alright? Your side of town got hit bad I heard!" "It did. My car is ruined." "Oh shit, how?" "It got flipped over, and then another car fell onto it. I don't know how bad it is." "Wow. Sorry about that. Think you'll can get a bus to work?" "I don't know. I'm not worried about that right now honestly..." "Ah, I mean if you want, I could drive you to work. I owe you after all." "...Thank you. I don't need a ride to work- how are you?" "Ha. I'm fine. Believe it or not I actually slept through the whole thing. My stuff is fine, beyond the gutters, something rammed into it." "Good you slept through it." "Yeah, biggest storm I've ever seen here, I heard some buildings near the dumps got

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totally floored.” “Yeah...” “Yeah, that sucks.” “...”

Chance gulped, then lowered his head. “Hey...” “Yeah?” “I...I hate to ask you, but I could use the help... Could you drive me somewhere?” “Of course. To where?” “It’s somewhere out of town, you don’t have to drive me the whole way...”

“I don’t mind, like I said I owe you.” “Well, it’s out of town, maybe a two hour drive...” “Oh, wow.” “I won’t ever ask you for anything again. And if you can’t then I understand, I’ll find a different way.” “No no, it’s fine, I can take you.”

Patrick met him at the apartment, Chance stood outside, waiting. He was worried he’d see Claudia again, maybe she’d come back here for whatever reason, probably not to look for him, but he didn’t want to see her, he liked how they left it after thinking a while.

The police were still there, it seems the clean up crew left after a short while, however that man died, couldn’t have been that gross. Chance watched the cops from far away, for the life of him he couldn’t tell what they were doing, almost seemed like they were goofing off. Under different circumstances Chance would have been worried the food would get cod, but it was going to anyway, and besides, it wasn’t going to taste good anyway. He didn’t know when he would show up, but it didn’t take long. Patrick car slowed until it was right in front of Chance, Patrick opened the door for him. “Hop in! Is that a cake?”

They didn’t talk for a long while, beyond a little surface level chatter here and there. And that mostly took place while they where still in the city, when they where leaving the city Chance watched everything closely, the people, the buildings, places he known, he tried to spot anyone he known but no dice. Whatever, he wasn’t getting anything out of it anyway. When they did get out of the city the chatter went totally dead, Chance took a glance here and there at Patrick and couldn’t get a good read on him. He wondered if he was annoyed at him for it being such a long drive. Normally the silence

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between them was pleasant, the only pleasant silence Chance had ever known, but something about this was strange, bad even. Chance cringed away from him and lowered his head at he thought, but he there was a reason he asked him. After over a hour and a half Patrick stopped the car and took a break to go in and get something to get at a fast food place. "Aren't you coming?" Patrick asked after seeing Chance unmoving in his seat. "No thank you." "Don't you have to piss or something?" "No." "Suit yourself." Patrick laughed with no malaise then went inside. He wasn't in there an awful long time, Chance wanted to follow him but didn't see that as the prudent thing to do. When Patrick did come back he seemed renovated, which relaxed Chance as they got back on the road. As the sky started to turn darker, the deep blue had lines of orange clouds form, that soon turned to pink. Patrick smiled "Look at that." "Yeah..." "Don't see that in the city." "Yes. One of the downsides to living in a city." "Nah-" Patrick turned his head briefly to look at Chance. "Other cities have beautiful skies, I've been around. I think there's something wrong with it." Chance just gulped, he wanted to agree. "I want to get out someday, maybe live in the countryside. Away from other people." Chance looked at him and nodded. "That sounds nice... How would you make your living?"

"I...Don't really know. Haven't thought of a way to crack that nut you know?" Chance nodded. Patrick shook his head looking out at the darkening sky, then back to the road. "I guess you don't wanna tell me, eh?" Chance pursed his lips, he known what he was referring too. "I'm meeting with a relative. We... Haven't spoken with each other in a long time." "Is that what that bread is for?" "Yes. It's uh, not bread though, it's cake. Red velvet cake." Patrick glanced at it and laughed, his eyes wrinkling up. "How did I not see that before? Ha. Have any for me?" "No. But I have something else for you, I'll show you when we get there." "Oh, okay cool, thanks you didn't have to make me anything. You're really into baking I guess." Chance nodded, he couldn't tell if Patrick noticed or not. "That's cool."

After that, the two fell back into their regular silence. Soon the sky went back, the backdrop a dark brown with a yellow lighted building here and

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there. As they went on Chance noticed something unsettling, Patrick's expression became more and more dark, maybe even sad? It was hard to tell, and Chance known no remedy for it.

Even though Chance hadn't been here in a long time, he known where everything was. And a grimness came over him, he realized (so close to being too late) that he didn't want Patrick to actually park near the house, that wasn't the wisest thing to do. "Hey, can we stop here!?" Chance asked suddenly right as they where besides a gas station, the closest location to the house. Patrick stopped the car suddenly and looked to Chance. "Really? Aren't we close?" "Yeah we are... But could we stop here?" "Sure, if you want." Chance got out of the car, food in his hands, he walked over to the front of the car. "How are you gonna get home?" "Ah-I'll call a ride. There's always some around, even out here." "Fine. Are you uh... Okay though? You look a little spaced out." Patrick said, resting his arm on the window looking up at Chance.

Chance felt a little pain in his heart, he shrugged. "I must be tired. But look, I got something for you..." Patrick raised an eyebrow as Chance reached behind himself and pulled a baggy out of his jacket pocket, Patrick looked at it for a second, then smiled. "What is that?" "It's frosting balls. It's left overs from the cake, the rolled them up and wrapped them into tin foil, but there in there, I thought you would like them." Patrick smiled more as he reached out and was given the bag by Chance, carefully he opened the bag, seeing five foil wrapped ball shapes, none very big. He laid the bag on his lap and started to unwrap one. After doing so he indeed found a messy but ball shaped frosting covered ball. "Aww man, thanks, looks awesome." And after a moment's thought, he cupped the ball into his mouth, held it there for a few moments, then after it was mostly dissolved, swallowed it. Chance smiled. The food was fine; he hadn't tampered with it. "Not bad." Patrick said unwrapping another one. "Want one?" Chance shook his head. "No, there for you." Patrick nodded, eating another one. "I hope you can find your way out here. It's dark as Hell." Chance nodded. "Yeah, I don't even know what time it is, I need to get going." Patrick looked over to the

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control panel on his car, while he unwrapped another ball. “7:24.” Chance moved away from the car, trying to look away. “Well, I hate to see you go, Mr. Sailor!” Patrick said in a mock accent Chance didn’t understand. “...Bye Patrick.” Patrick’s face darkened, smile faded. “Bye Chance...” they stared only a moment, until at last Patrick backed up his car and started moving away, the sight was too unpleasant, so before he was even turned round, Chance swung his head away, walking in the direction of the house, the sound of a car backing away faded out.

Everything was the same, but older, shaggier and darker. The house itself seemed more... Green? The closer he crept to the house, the colder his body became, and the grimmer his face. He knocked on the door, foot close to his body. There was no noise inside. He knocked again, nothing. He knocked once more, but it was no more loud than it was before. Then, he approached. When the door opened, it was very clear how much the tables had turned. Larry was much shorter than he used to be, he looked a lot older than he actually was, he was in his 60s but appeared to be in his 80s. Nothing about him was as it used to be, and the same could be said for Chance, now that he had gone through it all. “Chance?” Larry said, nothing about his tone was notable. “Yes.” Chance reached out his hands, pretending the cake. “I made this, for you. I’ve been baking for everyone I know.” They stared at each other for a second, then Larry backed away and Chance walked him, Chance shutting the door behind them. He known the house well, and though he had only physically been in it once before. He had walked through it a million times. He sat down across the table, the table itself was messy but the seats were empty, there was a lot of trash around but instead of it laying about it was piled into neat towers. Larry stood at a distance, watching, while Chance opened up the cake. “Can you hand me a knife? And stuff to eat it with.” Larry didn’t say anything, just walked into the kitchen and got a knife, two plates and forks. He gave Chance the knife and cut it into separate pieces. Chance handed Larry a plate with a large piece of cake on it, fork by his side. Larry looked at it for a moment then to Chance, slowly he spoke. “I haven’t seen you in a long time.” Chance nodded. “I know.” There was a moment of silence, then the old man sighed, “You came a long way to give me some cake...” Chance

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nodded. "Not a lot has changed around here it seems, your house, the desert, I not even us." Larry cringed and eyed the cake, not so unlovingly. "You look a lot older last I saw you, nothing about you looks the same. And I'm so much older, and a lot of things around here has changed, I've changed, and I assume you have too?" He asked, in a tone that was hard to parse, finally, Chance said. "Hardly." Larry cut a part of the cake, carefully took it too his mouth, old hands wobbling, then he ate it. Chance stared, then as Larry got another bite, Chance took another slice, got out his fork, cut a piece off, then put it in his mouth, tasting its frosting and off-putting base, then swallowed it.

THE END.